

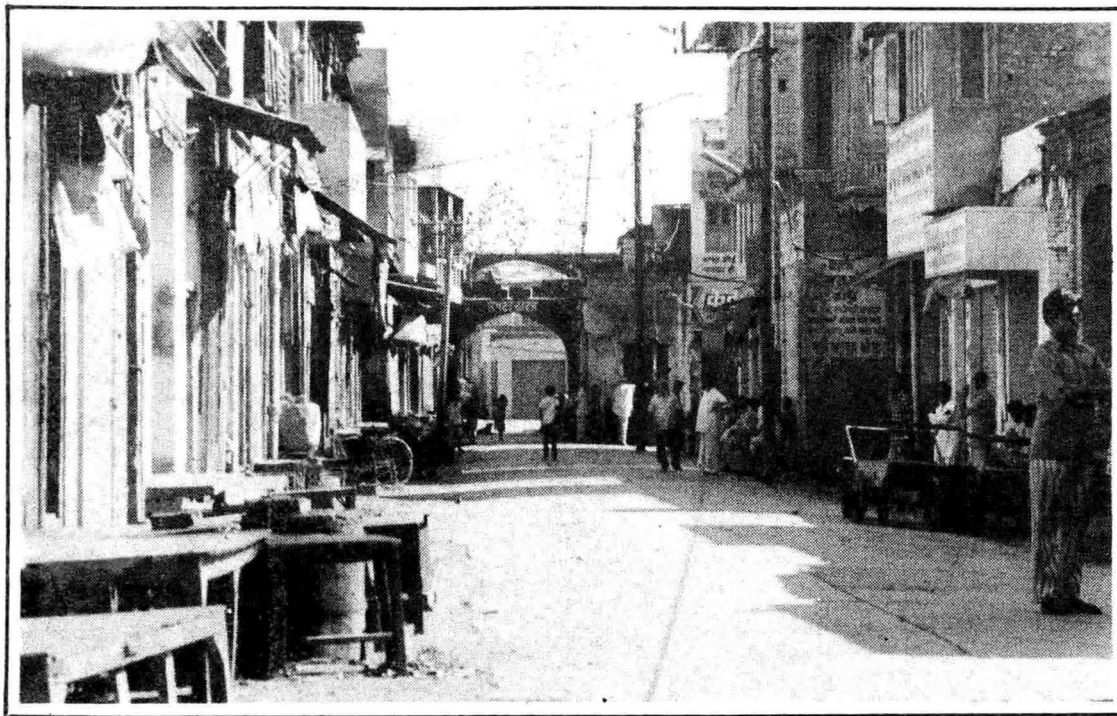
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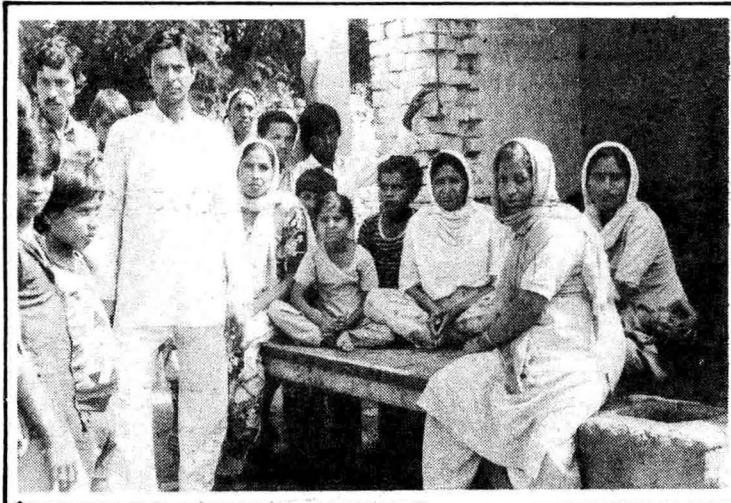
Rupees Two



Harji Malik

Above: Jindiala Guru empty streets, shuttered shops as the violence - hit village observes a protest bandh.

Nand Kishore, (left) whose brother Vijay Kumar was killed by terrorists in Krishnanagar, (Amritsar). Eleven people died, ten Hindus and one Sikh. Vijay's mother, Vina Devi (with folded hands) tells how her son was shot.



PUNJAB STRUGGLES FOR SANITY

THE ACCELERATING CRISIS

In Punjab today there is a tangible sense of forboding at the grassroots level and total lack of confidence in the ability of the administrative and political authority to control events.

Harji Malik

Punjab has reaped a bumper harvest. Mounds of golden wheat lie heaped in fields, in front of godowns. Where combines have been at work the packed bags are massed under plastic covers all along the highway from Delhi to Amritsar. Farmers are busy ploughing flooded fields preparing for the

paddy, and many fields are already green with seedlings. This is the familiar face of Punjab, smiling, a land of plenty. But under the facade of normalcy it is a different story.

Smiles are missing in Jindiala Guru, a village 12 kilometres from Amritsar, where terrorists struck on May 29th. On May 31st we saw only grim,

tension ridden faces in the village. A bandh had been called in protest at the inaction of the SHO, Paramjit Singh, demanding his removal. The streets were semi-deserted, CRPF jawans lounged in clusters everywhere, and Hindu residents sat in front of their shuttered shops, some talking softly, others silent. The village seemed to be waiting—for what would happen next.

Punjab today is a contradiction of realities. In Ludhiana, Jullundar, Amritsar, the bazaars are crowded, the mandis busy. Sikhs and Hindus chat together, Sikh dhabas do a thriving trade with Hindu customers and vice versa. Turbaned and bareheaded youngsters stroll together in joking camaraderie or go about sharing two wheelers. On the surface life seems absolutely normal.

But at night in many places two wheelers are not permitted on the roads after dark for fear of terrorist activity. In Krishnanagar, just on the outskirts of Amritsar, where 11

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Haryana bid to derail Venkataramiah Commission

Can the Accord be put back on track?

Baljit Malik

Haryana's role in the Venkataramiah Commission, which failed to submit its report on May 30, goes to suggest that not all the intractable elements which have come in the way of a credible solution of the Punjab problem are to be necessarily found in Punjab. Extremism and terrorism in themselves are not the only road blocks on the way to better days for the Punjabi people. According to sources close to the Commission, Haryana's attitude all along has been to prevent the Commission from arriving at a reasonable solution concerning Chandigarh.

The removal of Bhajan Lal is at least one indication that the central government and the Congress-I are beginning to have second thoughts about the Haryana factor in the Punjab tangle. Scuttled by indecision in New Delhi and non-cooperation by Haryana, the Accord has nevertheless been inching forward even as the political climate has continued to deteriorate in Punjab. What remains to be seen is whether the "new" dispensation in Haryana means business about implementing the Accord and accepting the Venkataramiah Commission's recommendations. The new Chief Minister has certainly said that Haryana would cooperate with the Commission's suggestions, but has yet to be seen to be acting on his words.

It is now on the cards that Chandigarh will be transferred to Punjab on June 21st, a transfer which should actually have taken place after the Indira Gandhi Award in 1970. However, sixteen years of political procrastination pale into insignificance when set against Haryana's bid to sabotage the proceedings of the Venkataramiah Commission. It will be recalled that Justice Venkataramiah, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, was asked to take over the Chandigarh question where Justice Mathew had left it. The Mathew Commission had found itself unable to make a clear recommendation regarding Chandigarh as it got bogged down by its interpretation of clause 7.2 of the Accord which opened by stating: "It had always been maintained by Smt Indira Gandhi that when Chandigarh is

to go to Punjab, some Hindi-speaking territories in Punjab will go to Haryana". The territories Mrs Gandhi had in mind were from Fazilka and Abohar. This was an arrangement with which the Mathew Commission agreed, but given its terms of reference, could not actually recommend. Whether Justice Mathew was right or wrong in his view that in return for Chandigarh Haryana should be compensated with territory drawn only from Fazilka and Abohar is not the most pertinent part of the Chandigarh story, what is pertinent is that according to the principles of village as a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity no territory from Fazilka and Abohar could be awarded to Haryana. Taking into account its interpretation of Mrs Gandhi's intentions coupled with the fact that the Punjabi-speaking village of Kandu Khera broke the principle of contiguity, the Mathew Commission found itself unable to recommend a transfer of territory to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. The Commission opined "In these circumstances it is for the Government of India to take such suitable steps as it deems fit including the appointment of a Commission to give effect to the general intention of Smt Indira Gandhi to transfer some Hindi-speaking territories in Punjab to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh".

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Atoning for Barnala's Sins

The second fortnight in May saw the whole country in turmoil. Tamil Nadu increasingly agitated over the killings of Tamils in Srilanka. Karnataka and Maharashtra on the verge of a border war over the teaching of Kannada in a Marathi speaking district of their state. The repercussions of the police massacre of innocent villagers in Arwal in Bihar. The involvement of the Chief of Orissa in a sex scandal. The Gurkha Liberation Front's agitation for autonomy in West Bengal (with a little help from the Cong-I). The Karanth — Vibha love — murder story in Madhya Pradesh and finally Punjab where inspite of Chief Minister Barnala's 'atonement' terrorists continue to bring shame to their community, Hindus emigrate out of Punjab, Akali politics sink deeper into the mud and the government continues to deny justice by passing yet another ordinance. The only good news was the conclusion of a successful hunger strike by Shabana Azmi, Anand Patwardhan and others to help rehabilitate evicted slum dwellers of Bombay.

Preminder Singh

Strange news also kept coming from abroad all fortnight:

- "US swoops on aliens nets 50 Sikhs" said The Indian Express of 14 May. Were they swimming? Or is this a new species of fish.
- On 19 May four Sikhs from Leicester were charged with plotting to kill Mr Rajiv Gandhi. The Indian High Commission (HC) was surprised that information about Mr Gandhi's itinerary came from a 'mole' within the HC and 'reproached the UK' for not informing them earlier.
- On the 22nd the HC got over their surprised. Mr. Gandhi's itinerary was public knowledge they insisted. I hope somebody apologised to Maggie.
- On the 22nd the plotters were released and rearrested which led defense lawyer Ivan Greffen to remark "There is a political conspiracy between the government of this country and the government of India" (Hindu May 24)
- On 23 May Gurpartap Singh Birk was sentenced to seven years imprisonment on charges of violating the US neutrality Act.
- On 28 May we were grateful to learn from the front pages of most newspapers that the secretly shot FBI film on Birk was shown on national television in the United States.

- On 25 May national headlines again with the news that "the Sikhs" planned to blow up EXPO 86 in Vancouver. The source of this information — a little provincial paper quoting "a police informer".
- * On 26 May four Sikhs shot Punjab Planning Minister Sidhu in Vancouver.
- * On 31 May five Sikhs were arrested near Montreal for plotting to blow up an Air-India plane.

Sport

That was the Foreign news. And now Sport. Good news from Mexico where the Italian football team was allowed one days sex 'if' they got through to the second round, but bad news for the Mexicans "The World Cup Soccer organising committee has banned romance during the Mexico finals..." How this is going to be possible is left in doubt "because hostesses are encouraged to be friendly and it is impossible to take ten steps without being greeted with a flashy smile and an enthusiastic 'hola' (hello)". On the cricket front Scyld Berry of the London 'Observer' discovered Srikant's batting secret. He has a habit of "gazing up at the sun before each delivery as a gesture of respect to Surya the sun god", "It might be that" says the Sunday Observer (May 18) "or may be he is trying to straighten his neck. Anyway we believe it is a good idea for India cricketers to regale English cricket correspondents with their oriental exotica".

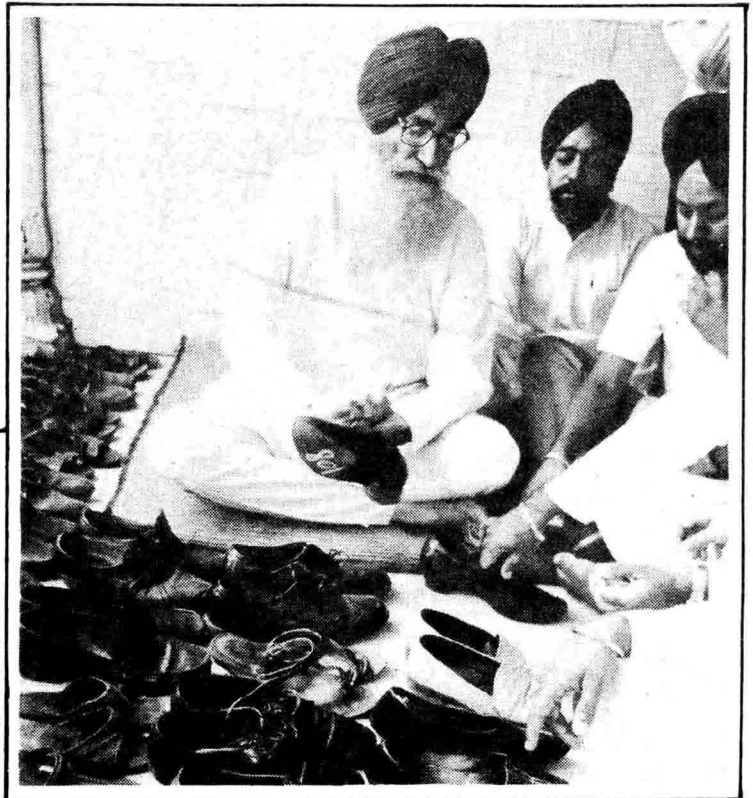
Barnala's penance

Nothing caused as much confusion, amusement and controversy however as Chief Minister Barnala's 'Paschatap'.

"The Punjab Chief Minister today appeared before the high priests of the Golden Temple and agreed to dust shoes for a week, deposit rupees 500 in the temple treasury and recite the JAPJI 25 times to atone for having sent the police into the Golden Temple on April 30." (Telegraph 18 May).

"But atonement for what?" asked Girilal Jain (TOI 19 May) "Our problem is that Mr. Barnala is not an ordinary Sikh who has bowed to the authority of the head priests. He is the Chief Minister of a State of the Indian Union and it is in that capacity that he has allowed himself to be judged and punished by an authority which the Indian Union cannot and does not recognize... Mr. Barnala is Chief Minister of all the Punjabis not just of the Sikhs... by doing what he has done. Mr. Barnala has not only humiliated himself and the government over which he presides but also delivered himself bound hand and foot to an extra constitutional authority."

George Verghese (IE 19 May) said "Barnala stands tall... if he has accepted certain token punishment... he has done so not with any sense of guilt but... in keeping with a tradition that the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh too once followed... while some may fault him he has acted appropriately even shrewdly without abandoning any principle. In doing so, Mr. Barnala has echoed Christ's answer when sought to be trapped by his detractors who asked whether and to whom people should pay taxes: "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is his." "This remains



Courtesy Indian Express

the best definition of the line that demarcates religion from politics in a secular as opposed to a theocratic state".

Nikhil Chakravarty (Telegraph 27 May) was not very happy with the Chief Minister who "makes a demonstration of his obeisance to the priestly order by turning himself into a shoeshine boy for his so-called misdemeanour in carrying out his secular responsibility of combatting secessionists as the head of the state government."

Many faces of Barnala

The Tribune (19 May) had a two in one explanation. They point out "the distinction between Mr. Surjit Singh the head of government and Mr. Surjit Singh a poor Sikh from Barnala. The priests handed down their 'tankha' to him in his former capacity but he received the punishment in his latter capacity." Khushwant Singh (Telegraph 26 May) splits him into three. "Barnala is three persons in one — Chief Minister of the State. President of the Akali Dal and a devout Sikh." He obtained sanction as party president, ordered 'Operation Search' as Chief Minister and accepted punishment as a Sikh.

Kuldeep Kumar (Sunday Observer May 25) was there as "Barnala the ordinary Sikh is atoning for the action ordered by Barnala the dutiful Chief Minister."

"Barnala sits cross-legged over a chadder... he is taking his job very seriously... with a clean white duster... he dusts both the inner and outer surfaces of the shoes. He is reciting the 'japji sahib' continuously. He is not looking around at all. His eyes are set on the shoes."

The Historical Angle

Easily the best article on the subject was the simple histori-

cal explanation "The meaning of Paschatap" (Tribune June 1) by Dona Suri. "Paschatap is part of the process of self-correction instituted... by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699... confession and atonement were the ways to keep human error from causing too much harm... twice the Sangat ordered Guru Gobind Singh to do Paschatap... even Maharaja Ranjit Singh was twice declared 'Tankhiya' (punished) and sentenced to twenty lashes... however after the Maharaja had allowed himself to be bound... the Jathedar declared that Ranjit Singh's humble submission was enough and waived the actual punishment."

Other Sikh leaders summoned before the Akal Takht: Master Tara Singh for breaking his fast unto death, Sant Fateh Singh for not keeping his word after threatening self-immolation. Both were punished. President Zail Singh was "called on the charge of having an umbrella over his head while walking to Harimandir Sahib but his explanation that he was not aware of the umbrella was accepted and no atonement required of him." Union Home Minister Buta Singh refused to appear before the Akal Takht and was excommunicated.

"To apologise at Darbar Sahib is not humiliating" says Inder Gujral (Sunday Observer 18 May) "but what if militants capture the temple again." Khushwant Singh (Telegraph June 2) has the beginning's of a solution. "It is time Sikh leaders come forward boldly into the open to combat this continuing menace which is bringing disgrace on the fair names of their Gurus and the community... In the history of the Sikhs there is not a single instance of people assuming the garb of Sikhs to kill unarmed innocent people... Sikhs will never forgive those who are blackening the pages of sikh history."

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HINDU FEARS IN PUNJAB

Jasjit Purewal

The final and seemingly ultimate stage in the Punjab crisis has arrived. Hindu migration to the neighbouring states has begun to lend credibility to the term 'Khalistan' as no single slogan or argument has done so far. And yet a single distinct streak of hope remains, defying what most have come to see as an irrevocable situation. This streak rests in the people of Punjab: the only factor which if realized can return Punjab even though few chose to mention it. Contrary to the media build up, the Hindus who leave today, do so not under fear of the Sikh masses but because of forces of terror which have a parallel not only in the November carnage but are uniformly and systematically destroying the social fabric of the entire nation.

The unscrupulous politician, the corrupt police force and the insensitive Army, are all too familiar terms; once again significant in the tale of the migrating Hindu. The following is an interview with Mr. Brij Mohan Shingari, a school teacher from Fatialahbad near Amritsar who has fled to Delhi with twelve other families from his area.

Q. When and why did you leave your homes?

A. We left after the Goindval incident on 7th May where 11 people were shot dead in 4 different incidents. Life has come to a standstill for us and it is not possible to live under such constant fear.

Q. Have all the Hindu families migrated from your area?

A. No! Many have chosen to stay. But all are terrified.

Q. Who do you fear specifically?

A. The terrorists, who continue, unchecked, to spread such absolute fear. More importantly, we fear the police both for its ineffectiveness and its complicity. And of course we fear the Akali government which has despite the Hindu mandate, proved totally incapable of protecting our rights.

Q. What about communal disharmony in Punjab? Has it reached an irreconcilable point?

A. No! There is very little tension between the communities as such since we share a home and culture which goes back generations. Thus the Hindu-Sikh unity at the village level cannot be challenged easily. The Sikhs feel equally confused by the mess and the militancy of the few and the difference lies in the fact that where two years ago they would have openly retaliated against any attack on their Hindu neighbours, today they are equally terrified and therefore silent. Some may see this as a change in the Sikh psyche; I just see it as fear. And let us not forget that the Hindu-Sikh connection through ancestry and marriage is not an easy one to challenge.

Q. You mentioned police complicity. Can you specify?

A. The Punjab police is the root cause of much of the disruption of peace in Punjab. The

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Hindu Militancy VS Terrorism

by Our Special Correspondent



Above: Ram Kant Jalota, Shiv Sena leader in Phagwara warns of increasing militancy of youthful Trishul Dharis. Below: Durgiana temple, Amritsar — view from Sant Niwas, local Shiv Sena office.

Jalota blames the Centre and the Punjab Government for inaction. While the Centre takes no responsibility for the Hindus, the Punjab Government does not have good intentions towards the Hindus. So the community must look after itself as well as it can. Jalota's contention is that in their view Hindus and Sikhs are "bhais" but he says that "We call them 'bhai-bhais', they do not call us brothers. Their Sant mahatmas have great influence on them. But none of their Sants, none of their leaders come here and call us their "bhais". Why cannot there be a 'hukumnama' to say that terrorists who kill innocent people are not Sikhs?"

Ashok Uppal is more militant. "We will not leave Punjab" he says. "We will fight and if we die we will take some with us" ●

"Our attempt is to make the Hindus so strong that they will not leave the Punjab." Ramkant Jalota, Hindu Shiv Sena leader, who lives in Phagwara, explains that this is the objective of the Shiv Sena in the present Punjab situation. A jeweller by family profession, Jalota explains that the Hindu Shiv Sena was started on Shivratri in 1984 because Bhindranwale men were killing Hindus, and Hindus like him felt the need for the community to unite to protect itself. The Shiv Sena organises people in villages and towns. "If any Hindu is killed or being harassed we go there", Jalota says, but denies reports that young men are given any training. They are only given religious instruction and "Trishul Dharan."

But he admits that wherever there is trouble Hindu Shiv Sena volunteers are sent to help out. He claims that these volunteers played their part in Nakodar, Batala, and other places. But Jalota warns "We are losing grip on our youth. They are asking us to give them military training. If they become militant, we may not be able to control them. People from other states have come to them, from Karnal, from Himachal and said that if you can't look after the Punjab, then we will look after it!"

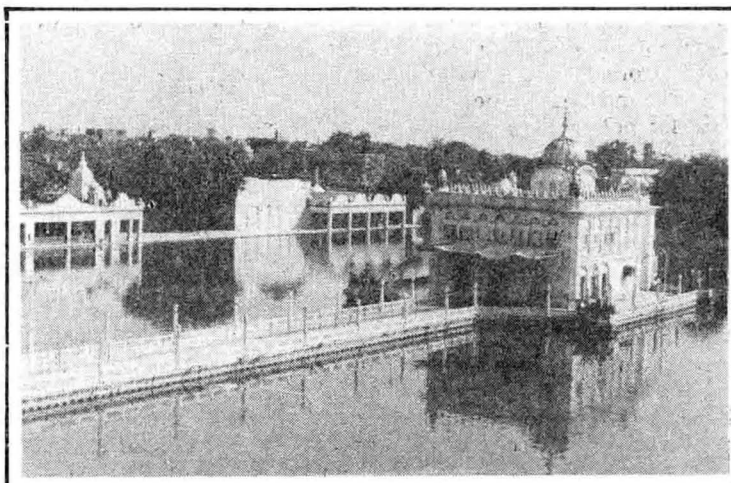
The only way to peace in the state, in Jalota's view, is for the Hindus to have equal force as the Sikhs. "We must be given licenses for arms" he goes on and explains that at the moment arms licenses are not given to Hindus — Ashok Uppal, the Phagwara Pradhan interjects to say that if necessary they will get arms illegally — his complaint being that because the police are mostly Sikhs, there is discrimination against Hindus. He alleges that Phagwara is peaceful only because the AISSF and Shiv Sena are evenly matched.

On March 23rd the Hindu Shiv Sena had a Trishul March in Amritsar demanding that the CRPF be given independent charge to deal with the terrorists but Jalota says that nothing came of it because the Centre was "warming" up Mr Barnala. He visited the border areas on the 6th May and wrote to Rajiv Gandhi on the next day. He warned that people would leave from various villages in Tarn Taran area, he told the D.C. at Amritsar, he telephoned the Chief Minister in Chandigarh. But no one responded. On the 17th and 18th people started coming out but no one stopped them.

Long live Khalistan.

Rajpal, you vacate the shop within 3 months, otherwise it will be set on fire. Last time you saved your life by escaping from your house. But now your end is near. You talk in a very boastful manner and declare your enmity with Sikhs. Now no time will be lost to take revenge for all this.

(All India Sikh Students Federation Amritsar) Jasvinder Singh and Amarjit Singh who are informing on us will soon be punished.



Pictures by Harji Malik



Above: Fatehabad village (Tarn Taarn dist.) from which Hindu migration is increasing. Hindu shopkeepers who are sticking it out. One of them (centre) has grown his beard and sports a saffron Pagri as protection (in Delhi many Sikhs have cut hair and shaved for identical reasons).

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The answer to all the above questions is one: a worldwide movement called Amnesty International!

Over the last twenty years, Amnesty International has moved to the forefront of the global human rights movement. Concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights, Amnesty has grown into a network of more than 5,00,000 members, subscribers and supporters in over 160 countries. There are over 3,000 permanent Amnesty groups in more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East.

Amnesty is primarily concerned with seeking the release of what it calls 'prisoners of conscience'—people detained for their beliefs or because of their colour, ethnic origin, race or sex. Working for the fair and prompt trial of political prisoners, it also acts against torture and the death penalty. More recently, it has launched a major campaign to combat extra judicial killings by governments. The widespread 'disappearance' of people has also become one of its crucial concerns.

Working through the worldwide network of local groups, in any one year, Amnesty works on behalf of over four thousand individual cases of prisoners of conscience. Members are asked to write or send telegrams to heads of State or appropriate officials on behalf of the prisoners. Groups only handle cases of prisoners held in countries other than their own. It is a reflection of the power of this campaign that one out of every two such prisoners are freed, granted a reduction of sentence or given better treatment.

Amnesty also sends missions or trial observers to countries, financially supports prisoners and their families, acts as a

pressure group on governments and several United Nations bodies, and regularly publishes major reports.

These reports have become a major hallmark of Amnesty's work. There are three main kinds of reports: Country reports documenting violation of human rights, special reports on political killings, torture, etc. and an annual report highlighting violations all over the world.

The real strength of Amnesty's work lies in its strict adherence to political neutrality. Yet, there have been regular accusations and angry reactions from all across the political spectrum. For instance, Amnesty was called an instrument of communist terrorism by Brazil while Ghana has called it "an imperialist body". The Soviet Union once described Amnesty as an "organisation which conducts anti Soviet propaganda".

It must be understood that Amnesty's work has severe limitations. While most of these are self-imposed, some need to be done away with (for instance, the delay in responding to gross, systematic violations). However, within the scope of a major international initiative that maintains impartiality and enjoys a legitimate position all over the world, what it has achieved is of no small significance. There is, obviously a lot more to do and Amnesty will have to both expand its mandate (as it has already, done to an extent, with the inclusion of political killings and disappearances) and create structures to respond more rapidly than it does at present.

The violations of civil liberties and democratic rights continue unabated all over the world. In the years to come, organisations like Amnesty are going to be called upon to pay an even more critical and incisive role in constructively intervening in this situation. A more effective chain, linking together efforts from the local to the international will need to be established. In the final analysis, Amnesty should definitely continue to be a crucial part of this worldwide movement which can, at best, be called a conspiracy of hope ●

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The Penalty of Death

Strongly believing that the death penalty has no special deterrent value and that it encourages a climate of violence and disrespect for human life, Amnesty has unequivocally opposed the death penalty.

The worldwide movement for abolition has had significant, if slow, achievements. Forty six countries have legally abolished it (eighteen of these retain it only for certain war-time crimes), while 50 countries have not carried out any executions since 1980.

In spite of Amnesty's widespread campaigns (which extend to the public, to legislators and to heads of government), according to its own documentation, 1,125 people were executed in 1985 alone (The true total would, of course, be much higher as many governments deliberately conceal or fail to announce the execution of those it arrests).

Of these, there were 137 confirmed executions in South Africa while at least 57 were executed in Pakistan. In China, where over 40 offences carry the death penalty, 135 were executed, some for forming a "reactionary secret society" and "exploiting feudal superstitions." Three people were shot after being convicted of holding "dance and sex parties."

Attack on Civil Liberties

In India, various civil liberties and democratic rights activists and organisations have been facing an increasing onslaught and villification campaign by central and state governments. The killing in cold blood of Dr. Ramanatham, a leading civil liberties figure in Andhra by the police in September last year was an explosive instance of this new trend. Another example was the systematic smear campaign that was started against PUCL and PUDR after the publication of its now classic report "Who Are The Guilty?". The CFD report "Oppression in Punjab" also drew a vehement response from the government. Its authors were arrested and charged with a host of offences including Sedition!

It is instances like these that motivated Amnesty to include in its statement before the 42nd annual session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (1986) the following:

"Human Rights would remain a theoretical concept without people acting in their defence. In most countries, there are isolated individuals or small groups of dedicated people who take it upon themselves to collect information about violations of human rights and to publicize their findings. But human rights defenders often have to work against overwhelming odds. In trying to protect the rights of others, they have themselves in many countries faced arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearances" or extrajudicial execution. [They] have risked their liberty and in some cases their lives in their work to protect the lives of others... If the very people who commit themselves most deeply to that cause themselves fall victim of human rights violations, it is time for the international community to react" ●

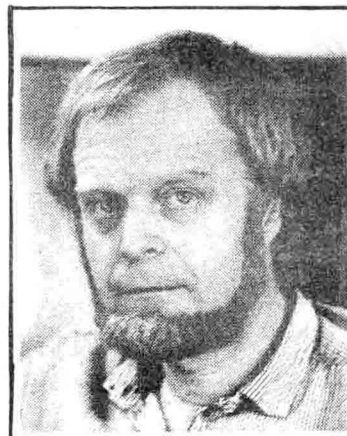
Amnesty International



1982

Mr. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

They call him "Mr Amnesty International". He is Thomas Hammarberg, a tall, slim Swede—dress him in the right clothes and he is the perfect Viking, complete with the close clipped beard—who represents the international conscience as Secretary General of Amnesty International. He was recently in Delhi for Amnesty's 25th anniversary. Amnesty knows no frontiers and Hammarberg gives the representatives of governments many uncomfortable moments. For he knows that more than 50 per cent of governments in all parts of the world have their "prisoners of conscience", a matter they would rather push under the carpet. But Amnesty does all it can to expose those secrets and to work for the release of such men and women by awakening the conscience of all those who believe in human rights.



Courtesy Indian Express

Soft spoken, an economist by training, a working journalist for 20 years, Hammarberg was involved in the anti-apartheid movement in student days. In 1964 Amnesty International came to Sweden. He had been writing and broadcasting on issues connected with development aid, socio-economic prob-

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lems and human rights. "Amnesty's work offered a way of working against oppression in concrete ways which appealed to me" he says. Tired of the usual clichés and discussions he saw Amnesty work as the way to express concrete solidarity, working with individuals as an individual. Their principles were his beliefs.

So he joined them, forming a little group in the Stockholm suburb where he lived. Made Chairman of the Swedish Board in 1970, he was nominated to the international executive a year later, in charge of the ideological content, the basic principles of the organisation. In 1980 when he was elected Secretary General, a more than full time job, he moved to London.

Amnesty's Working Methods

Amnesty has its own way of working. Members do not work for the organisation in their own countries because the subject matter they have to deal with is so sensitive, they would inevitably be drawn into the political web. And since Amnesty has 'no politics' the work would be, impossible. So members write to the press, mount campaigns and carry on other activities for prisoners in countries other than their own.

Collecting information is an informal affair. People write in to Amnesty about cases they know about or have read about. Or family members of prisoners send in details. Civil rights organisations, trade unions and other bodies also feed in information. Amnesty in London subscribes to newspapers from many countries and gleans information through them. (This reporter received a letter from Amnesty after publishing an article on "Operation Woodrose" asking for more details.)

All information is evaluated and vetted thoroughly by a staff of 100 researchers, part of the 800 strong secretariat. Once the area specialist researcher is satisfied that facts are correct, information is sent to local groups for rechecking. After a second evaluation the report is written, and sent to the Secretary General and Amnesty's Legal Cell. If there are any questions the facts are checked for the third time with initial contacts, and only after this is the report published. "These procedures sometimes delay a report but we feel they are essential because our facts must be correct" Hammarberg says, pointing out that Amnesty's credibility is the core of its work.

Every major report is sent to the Government involved before release — initially this was not done — and "we tell them that their response will be pub-

lished along with the report." But Hammarberg says, somewhat ruefully, the response is 50-50, and usually poor. Perhaps some countries are to be embarrassed to respond.

On his third visit to India — his first visit was in 1971, the second in 1977, both exciting years he admits — Hammarberg arrived from the Philippines where after 14 years of Emergency, illegal arrests, torture and "salvaging", the Philippine equivalent of "encounters," the Aquino government asked his advice on constitutional safeguards for human rights.

The main problem in India in Hammarberg's view is that although there is no policy of repression or suppression of human rights, there is torture in police stations, sometimes followed by deaths. Where serious investigations of such happenings should be carried out, they are not. But he feels these violations are because of neglect, not policy. The neglect, however, is very deep.

Mr Amnesty does not see Amnesty's hailed success as "success but rather, a failure, because the need for Amnesty's work is greater now than it was 25 years ago. Amnesty will recognise its success only when its work is not needed."



Amnesty's concerns in India

In its Annual Report for 1985, Amnesty drew attention to the information it had received from nearly all Indian states that criminal suspects and political prisoners were tortured especially in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. Reports of deaths in police custody as a result of torture were frequent. Amnesty also wrote to the Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu calling for judicial enquiries into such cases.

Many of Amnesty's concerns related to the state of Punjab. For instance, on June 14, 1984, it telexed the Prime Minister, acknowledging that the government had faced serious problems of internal security in Punjab and asking whether the 6,500 people reportedly arrested would be charged with specific criminal offences or released. It urged the release of four Akali Dal leaders arrested under the NSA during or after the army action in the Golden Temple — including the party's president — who had apparently not been involved in violence.

Amnesty also took note of reports that 28 children aged between four and 12, who had been arrested at the time of the June army action, were being detained in Ludhiana Jail. On 21 September, the Supreme Court ordered the immediate release of four women and 22 children aged between one and 16, stating that it was obvious that the women and children must be devotees and pilgrims visiting the Golden Temple who had been caught in the action that took place on 5 June. Amnesty said these reports confirmed its fears that innocent people, whom it considered to be prisoners of conscience, were among those arrested at the Golden Temple.

Deaths in Custody

Early this year, Amnesty also published a major report concerning 'Deaths in Police Custody' allegedly as a result of torture or shooting in 1985-86. It stated that dozens of such deaths in custody have been reported each year. (For example, in Andhra Pradesh, seven cases of deaths in police custody were reported between 1 January 1985 and 31 May 1985, where death was allegedly due to torture. In December 1985, two men, arrested on suspicion of involvement in criminal activities, died, allegedly following

torture in police stations in Kerala. In many cases the victims were reported to have received multiple injuries, sustained while in detention. Reports come to Amnesty from nearly all Indian states, irrespective of whether the state is ruled by the Congress(I) or by an opposition party.

Reports of deaths in custody, concern both people arrested on suspicion of having committed criminal offences, as well as those arrested in connection with alleged political activities, particularly those involving violent acts. In the above report, Amnesty gives available details about seven cases of deaths in police custody reported during 1985 and January 1986 which concern persons reported to have been actively involved in political activities and, in one recent case, a civil liberties activist who, according to the state government concerned, was also involved in political activities. These cases were from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab, and the Union territory of Delhi.

One such example was that of Daljit Singh of Delhi. On 24 January 1986, Daljit, a 27 year old Sikh from 674 Military Road, Anand Parbat died in police custody. According to reports in the Indian press he was arrested in connection with allegations that he had harboured two alleged Sikh extremists.

Reacting to the contradictory press reports about the arrest and death of Daljit in custody, Amnesty was concerned that there was a possibility that Daljit Singh may have died as a result of injuries inflicted upon him during interrogation between the time when he was apparently taken into unacknowledged detention late on January 15, 1986 and his death on the evening of 24 January, and not as a result of high blood pressure and asthma as the police claimed. Amnesty was aware "that steps had reportedly been taken by the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate to investigate his death (but) it was important that a full inquiry by an independent judicial authority be instituted and that the findings of such an inquiry be published in their entirety and that both post mortem reports be made available to his relatives".

Amnesty referred to the Supreme Court's observation that in these cases of custody deaths the responsible police often escape persecution and conviction for lack of evidence. It called for an amendment of the law of evidence. Although the holding of magisterial enquiries in all cases of deaths in police custody is mandatory under Sec. 176 of the Criminal Procedure Code, such enquiries are not always held. In the Punjab, for example, several cases have been reported during the latter part of 1984 where persons allegedly

died in police or army custody without inquests having been held. Relatives allege that no record of the arrest was kept and that no post-mortem was carried out. Cases have also been reported in which the body, sometimes with multiple injuries, was handed over by police to relatives, who were then asked to sign statements that the death was due to suicide.

Amnesty also added that in a majority of cases of deaths in custody, magisterial enquiries were carried out by executive magistrates and therefore were subject to control by the government.

When held, magisterial enquiries into deaths of detainees are often not conclusive because, since the person died in police custody, independent evidence is hard to obtain. In nearly all cases the magistrate must depend on the police to investigate allegations affecting members of their own forces. In those cases in which magisterial enquiries found that deaths in custody were the result of police brutality, responsible police were usually suspended from duty or transferred. They were almost never subjected to criminal proceedings and convicted.

Interestingly, Amnesty also emphasized that the government of India was signatory to a number of international Conventions relevant to the prohibition of torture and cruel and inhuman treatment implying therefore that the government was violating these commitments.

Amnesty adopts Indian academic

Early this year, Amnesty adopted Dr. K. Balgopal, General Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, as a prisoner of conscience.

Dr. Balgopal, a lecturer in Mathematics at the Kakaiya University, Warangal, was arrested on November 16, 1985.

Amnesty expressed concern at the possibility that Dr. Balgopal's arrest may have been prompted by his civil liberties activities rather than his involvement in a conspiracy to murder Sub Inspector Reddy and other events, as the police alleged.

Amnesty was especially anxious that a case against Dr. Balgopal under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act 1985, had been filed and that he may face trial under its provisions. The Act permits one year detention without trial in circumstances which make it extremely difficult to obtain bail. Additionally it stipulates trial in camera without the disclosure of the identity of witnesses and restricted appeal procedures. Amnesty was further concerned that if a person is convicted of involvement in murder under Sec. 3 of the Act, the imposition of the death sentence was mandatory. (Balgopal has been subsequently released).

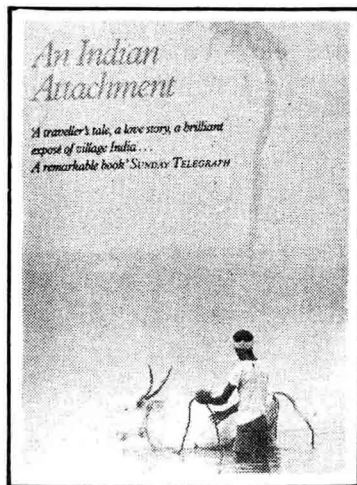
Citation for the Nobel prize awarded to Amnesty in 1977

"The world has witnessed an increasing brutalization, and internationalization of violence, terrorism and torture Through its activity for the defence of human worth against degrading treatment, violence, and torture, Amnesty International has contributed to securing the ground for freedom, for justice, and thereby also for peace in the world."



Nihang & Mem

As bizarre a true story as I have ever read. And rarely another as beautifully written. A young Oxbridge type English girl who is a landscape architect lusts to see the world. All she has is in her haversack. Apart from a change of clothes, she has a pen and note-book. She has very little money. So she travels by bus or train, eats whatever she can get, sleeps wherever sleep overtakes her. In the park, a *dharmshala* or a gurdwara. She arrives in Calcutta. After trudging round *bazaars* she finds a gurdwara in Howrah which has a large dormitory where anyone can stay for three days and nights and get free food from the langar. Here she runs into Pritam Singh, an opium addict, a smuggler, who has been in jail in Pakistan. He is now a reformed character and works as a *sevadar* (servitor). He has become a Nihang, wears a massive blue turban and carries a three feet long kirpan. He cannot speak a word of English. The English girl does not know a word of Punjabi. It is love at first sight. Not, as you might suspect, lust for sexual intercourse, but a mysterious uncommunicable attachment for each other. It sounds like the story of Tarzan. The Ape Man was taught to speak by his white girl: "Me Tarzan, you Jane". The long-haired, long-bearded Nihang is likewise taught English by the girl: "You Jungli, I Sarah Lloyd." Sarah tries to probe into Jungli's (the name she has given to Pritam Singh) mind: "Whatever did he see in me? For I had come, fair haired, blue eyes, a creature from an unknown world, dropping like a genie into his familiar existence. Dif-



ferent habits, different values, different attitudes." Months later when they are living together in his village as man and wife without being married, she asks Jungli what had drawn him towards her when they had first met. He replied naively, "I saw a girl, all alone. No mother; no father; no relative; no friend. She was thousands of miles from her homeland. Yet she wasn't afraid. She looked happy."

Sarah Lloyd continues: "I have heard it said that people fall in love not with a person, but with a quality they lack but would like to possess. My initial attraction to Jungli had been precisely that: among the things I admired about him, living by instinct and supreme generosity came high on the list. Though being so different in these respects we gradually weakened what we loved in the other. Jungli began to think things out, and I absorbed his sorrow."

Jungli returns to his village near Amritsar, Sarah Lloyd continues her travels. After a few

weeks in Bangladesh, seeks out her Jungli in his village. It is then that the love affair is consummated: "After a week of being together 24 hours a day, the relationship did become physical. It was inevitable," writes Sarah. "I had tried to prevent it for, quite apart from anything else, Jungli's religion prohibited sex outside marriage. 'You have been baptised,' I reminded him in my faltering, ungrammatical Punjabi. 'It won't do.' I respected the Sikh faith and its moral code. Women were supposed to be treated as sisters". Oh one or two won't matter, he replied off-handedly."

The love-affair was doomed to fail, Jungli could do no better than take odd-jobs as *granthi* at different gurdwaras or try and run a *dhaaba* on the Grand Trunk Road. Sarah goes with him wherever he goes. Shares his company, suffers being beaten by him when he is drunk, cooks for him, washes his clothes and nurses him in sickness. She describes the heat and dust, the squalor and stench of open sewers along which they have their shack, the hazards of defecating in the open with snakes, scorpions and rats crawling about. Their interminable quarrels between members of Jungli's joint family, their neighbours and the stupidity of people worshipping libidinous sants who make religion into a business. She portrays her characters and the Punjab countryside with the finesse of a portrait painter and a landscape artist. I cannot recall another travelogue on India as well written as Sarah Lloyd's *An Indian Attachment* (Futura)

Khushwant Singh

A letter to the nihang's mem

Dear Sarahji,

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading your book "An Indian Attachment". What was most appealing about it was its honesty and straightforwardness.

Your choice of nick-name — Jungli — for Pritam could perhaps be misunderstood. But then you have to be rustically Punjabi to understand that Jungli can sound both pejorative and endearing, or rather a teasing mixture of both. If I were you, I would not worry too much about likely criticism from smug left or right wing ideologues, who will probably detect vestiges of a white colo-

nial mentality in your manner of addressing your beloved Nihang.

Jungli, I'm sure, was the right word, for Pritam or beloved would have been too pretentious and rather difficult to fit the finite space of your time-capsuled relationship. From your Staffordshire cottage, you would have regretted calling him 'beloved'. You didn't get the sympathy you craved for from him and you didn't give him any from your side, which is fair enough.

It is difficult for urbane Sikhs like me to appreciate or understand what Nihangs like Jungli are about. So it was all the more

remarkable that you were able to actually establish a relationship with him in spite of all the cultural differences and obstacles you encountered.

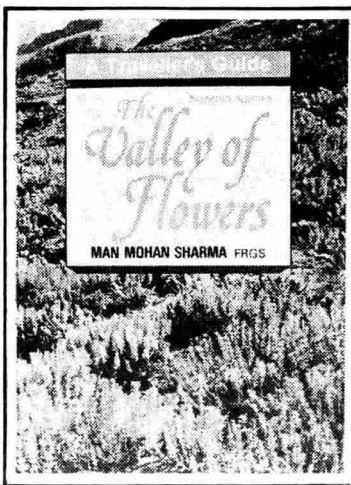
Reading a book like your's, there is always a temptation to pass judgment instead of just accepting it for what it is. But it is difficult to resist the temptation of doing just that since you yourself are so disarmingly self-critical about the doubts that might be raised about your exploitation of Jungli as a way of feeling India in your bones.

Perhaps you overstate your using him and his dependence, attachment and helplessness about you. Could it not be that once you finally departed, it did not take him too long to economise on his emotions and sense of hurt. If he was capable of materialistic, even sexual austerity, as you suggest he was, might he not have also been capable of restraining self-pity and a feeling of rejection?

You know him better and might also know what has become of him. Could he be languishing in an Indian jail, having been picked up by the security forces as a potential terrorist? ●

B.M.

THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS



The valley has attracted many people since Smythe's Book 'The Valley of Flowers' was published, too many in the recent years of popular tourism, so that in fact the Valley was 'closed' for some time because vandalism threatened its survival. It has now been declared a National Park and one hopes that this will not just be an empty nomenclature.

There are two routes to the Valley and Hemkund, one via Garhwal, the other through Kumaon, both converging at Karna Prayag, the confluence of the Alakananda and the Pindari rivers. Sharma describes both, giving a little background about the places enroute, inserting snippets of historical information, describing the birds, the trees and the kind of scenery to expect, and adding the appropriate folklore which he has obviously studied.

One wishes that the author had included more maps. There are just two, one a very sketchy affair giving the route from Rishi: esh to Hemkund, another with the trekking routes around the Valley of Flowers. But as he describes the journey the reader would like to follow him on a map, which is impossible. On both routes there are places renowned for their beauty or their religious connections. The Garhwal route goes through Dehra Dun, Haridwar and Rishikesh, the Kumaon one from the charming hill station of Ranikhet to Kausani with its unsurpassed view of the vast Himalayan range from Kedarnath to Api, and to Bhageshwar.

All along the rest of the journey from Karna Prayag to Gobindghat, from where the real trekking starts, the author entertains the reader-traveller with a variety of legends, but one would like to see a little more description of the scenery which is amongst the most beautiful in the country. But from Gobindghat onwards there are no complaints. Sharma describes the flowers, the vegetation, the details of the route, along with some of the festivals which take place in the villages. Songs and stories are also included in the text and the author gives the reader a glimpse of the life of the villagers which the traveller passing through would never see.

Hemkund Sahib, Lokpal Lake as it was known through the Ramayan tradition—the ancient Lakshman Temple stands near the Gurudwara—has a chapter devoted to its history. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, described the lake in his *Vachitra Natak* as a place where he had meditated in a previous reincarnation and Sharma describes how devotee Bhai Sohan Singh trekked through this difficult terrain until he came on the clear blue waters of this glacial lake on the shores of which stands the

Continued on page 7

Tiger MOUNTAIN

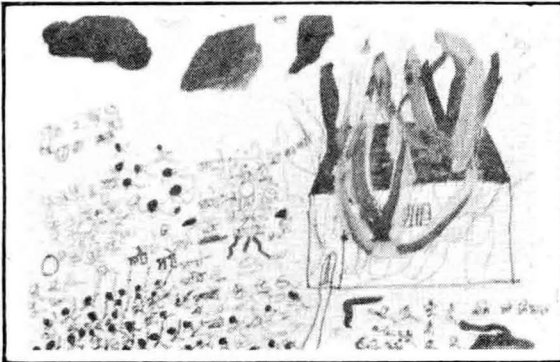
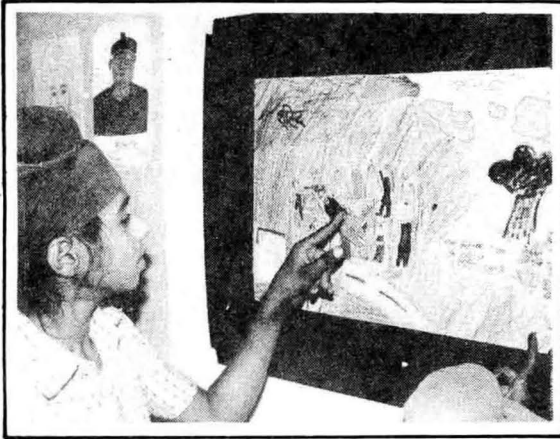
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The Art of Healing

Pictures by Sanjay Mitra

Historical events; pleasant, ugly or traumatic — they leave their own peculiar impressions on the minds of children.

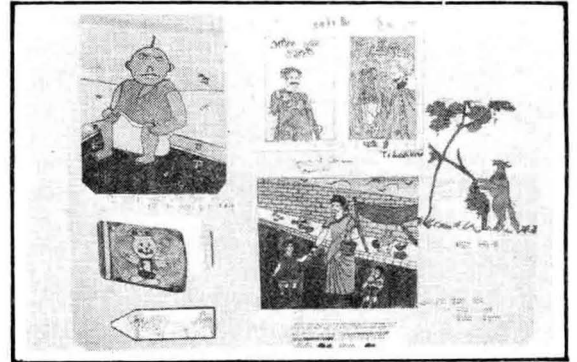
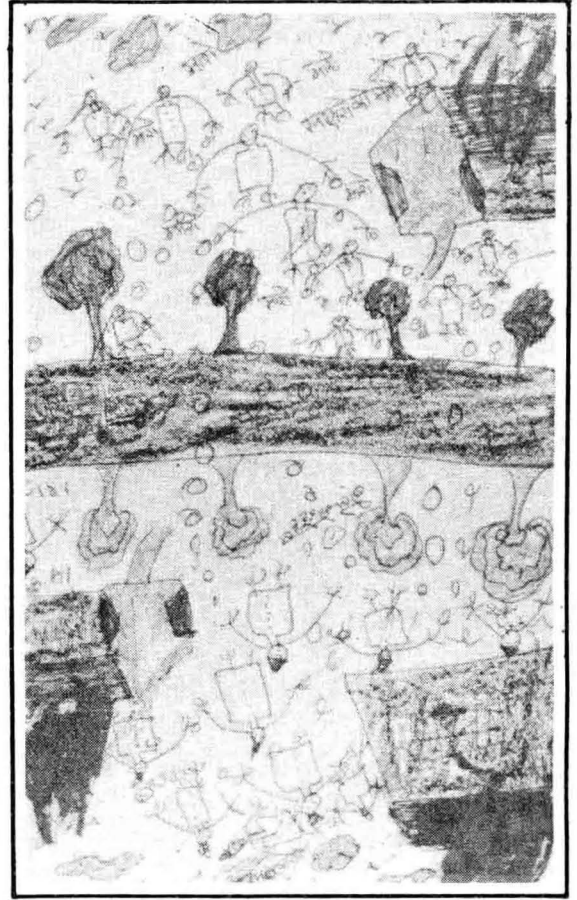
They get embedded in layers of consciousness, finding expression in multitudinous ways in the course of a life time.

The events of 1984 were no exception, neither were the part-orphaned children of the carnage.

Many of these children now live in Delhi's Tilak Vihar with their widowed mothers and other relations.

Life for these children has been a collage of fires, crowds, clubbings, death, survival, HOPE and COURAGE.

Lovleen Choudhry, an artist from Poona and the Nishkaam Sikh Welfare Council have been working with the children in a humble attempt at the art of healing.



Illusions that are Eyelids

Human relations are fragile. They do not stand much scrutiny. They have to be taken on faith. Restraint and self-deception are basic alloys that make our relations work. Illusions that support our self-estimation are so necessary in life. These are the eyelids without which the light of truth is so unbearable. True, life is a little less honest thus, but it is far more endurable. We have to give ourselves a sense of purpose, and nothing must be done to disturb our faith in that purpose. This gives a sense of worthiness in one's being. Others must support us or else we lose our sense of belonging, and life then is shorn of all value. This is the psychological core of 'Muhaz Bata Muhaz'.

A simple story of an army captain's death; its news reaching his family, followed by the dead body which is cremated with military honours, is the framework of this novelle. The action takes place in about seven days of actual time. The significance of the story, however, covers hopes, fears and values cultivated over generations. The simple friendships, rivalries, triumphs, egos of people living and working in the Punjab countryside are all evoked in this story.

Provocation indeed is the central principle of Deep's narrative mode. He conjures up a variety of characters, situations, tensions. There is marvellous



restraint in expression. The details are apt, meaningful. Nothing is redundant or extraneous. The story moves at various levels—temporal, spatial and psychological. Short pointed use of flashbacks weave a complex texture which reveals the complexity of human behaviour. Nothing is taken for granted. The eldest son, Jarnail, has a life of his own and yet respects the aspirations of his father. The two younger sons openly declare their choices. The wife is no more willing to be bullied, her sons have grown up.

The fundamental desire among all the characters is to live their lives to the full, even when aware of many obstacles that lie on the way. They will assert themselves given even an outside chance. Such is the basic trait of Punjabi character.

What astonishes one in 'Muhaz Bata Muhaz' is that despite its brevity, it encompasses life in its vast breath and varied dimensions. The story develops at a pace which is brisk and gradually accelerates to a crescendo. The novelle is built in the manner of a typical musical composition in which each stroke is carefully assimilated in the total design. Deep's finest achievement in this novel is the creation of a physical and mental atmosphere with sensitive use of localisms without in any way impeding the narrative flow.

Death is the pivot of life among Punjabis. The death-awareness and the event of death start a whole chain of life-processes even while concluding some of them. This work of fiction is yet another instance of the pervasive Punjabi cultural ethos.

Pointed, poignant and rich in its human and emotional content, 'Muhaz Bata Muhaz' by Iqbal Deep, with its small canvas but wide range and reach, is an important event in Punjabi fiction.

B S Rattan

Muhaz Bata Muhaz — a novelle in Punjabi by Iqbal Deep; Nanak Singh Pustakmala; Amritsar Pages: 94 Price: Rs. 20/-.

THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS

Continued from page 6

newly constructed gurudwara. The four months the shrine is open during the year sees thousands of men, women and children paying their respects and bathing in the icy waters after the tough climb of eight kilometres over a gradient of 5000 feet from Gaggaria. Babes in arms and grey-haired ancients are amongst the faithful.

The last part of the book is devoted to practical details. Travel information is given about how to get there, where to stay. There is information about clothes and equipment, about food to take, health precautions, permits etc. The vocabulary of 'useful Garhwali words and phrases' is a thoughtful addition for the foreign traveller, perhaps even for indigenous ones! A special section of information for trekkers gives even more details, including the different tracks. Finally the amateur botanist has a list of some flowers found in the Valley, the birdwatcher the names of com-

mon birds to watch for, a glossary is an additional advantage and a select bibliography provides follow-up for those who succumb to the Uttarakhand enchantment.

Unfortunately for a guidebook on an area like this good photographs are essential. Not only has Sharma given us too few but the reproduction of photographs in the book is extremely disappointing. The best photograph is the outside jacket with its profusion of flowers found in the Valley. If the author could have included a few colour photographs of individual flowers and had drawings of the rest it would have added to the charm of the book. Perhaps this could all be rectified in the next edition, for a practical guidebook like this to this beautiful and fascinating part of the country is certainly an important contribution. And perhaps a soft-cover edition would be easier on the pursestrings of enthusiastic trekkers for whom Rs 95/- is a rather steep price.

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Persecution Fear and Migration

There are many kinds of migration. Migration from drought, hunger and war; or migration in search of employment, adventure, a new life in a new world.

The migration now occurring before our eyes of Hindus leaving Punjab and Sikhs heading for the "Land of Five Rivers" is another kind of migration. This migration is necessitated by social and political oppression. This is migration caused by a sense of persecution and fear.

There can be, and indeed there are, individuals and communities who survive on strong persecution complexes, caused by real or imaginary fears. In the current phenomenon of Hindu-Sikh migration, the fears are real. Both communities share the experience of being terrorised and held up for ransom. In both cases the State, at the central or regional level, has been left standing, unable to fulfil its responsibility to protect its citizens. It has been noticed that elements in the political and administrative hierarchy are actually unwilling to intervene on behalf of innocent, law-abiding citizens.

However, unlike the centre's culpability in arousing a general anti-Sikh hysteria and thus accentuating the community's fears and alienation, the Barnala Government has not encouraged a hate campaign against the minority community. In fact, it has made a positive effort to persuade the Hindus to return to their homes. Yet, the recent experience of both communities has led them to mis-trust the State and its agencies, or at least elements within them.

Hindus in Punjab have adequate reason to doubt the **ability**, if not the intention of the state government to protect their life, property, civil liberties and democratic rights. Not only Hindus, but as the tragedy of Jandiala shows (see lead story page 1), even Mazbi and non-keshdhari Sikhs find it difficult to have faith in the government's capability to protect them. And yet the Akalis under Barnala were returned to power with an unprecedented majority because of the support of Hindus and "scheduled caste Sikhs".

The role of the Badal-Amarinder led dissidents in weakening the Akali Dal Government has also impeded its efforts to tackle the terrorist threat more effectively. The dissident legislators from the violence-prone areas have not thought it fit to visit their constituencies to restore confidence in the minority sections of their electorate. They simply pass the buck on with the simple proposition—"This is the government's responsibility, not ours". And they go on to add, "We are irrelevant". They may be right; for their reservations about their own relevance could soon turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hindu fears in Punjab are echoed by Sikh insecurity in Haryana, Delhi and other states comprising the northern Hindi "heartland" of the country. The carnage of November 1984 has not been forgotten. Neither has it been forgotten that those guilty of the carnage have not been brought into the net of the apparatus of law and order. The lesson has been learnt that sometimes the State has its own reasons for appearing to condone killing and a breakdown of law and order. Many Sikhs believe that there can be a repeat of November 1984. The irony is that many who died in that carnage were supporters of the same Congress-I whose cadres massacred them.

It would be naive to believe that intolerance, fundamentalism and terrorism can be countered by a State which is seen in the public eye as being increasingly subject to the same tendencies. Dissidence from stated policies and objectives, whether in Chandigarh or Delhi, within Akali or Congress-I ranks, cannot but play into the hands of forces inimical to a democratic India, which thrives on its "unity in diversity". It is amply clear that dissidence against the spirit of the Accord is a disadvantage shared by certain factions both within the Akali fold and the ruling party in New Delhi.

Punjab today and Delhi 1984 are grim reminders that those elements which militate against a democratic and humane social and political ethos are not a monopoly of any one region or political party in the country. Unless the political parties and citizens' organisations at various levels can live up to their democratic and nationalist credentials, the struggle against fundamentalism and terrorism, religion or state-inspired as the case may be, could turn out to be a losing one.

Punjab Group Initiative

Given the stakes in Punjab, there is an all-round need to rally the forces of sanity and unity across party and communal lines. It would be fatal to lose hope. It is in pursuit of its belief that it is 'never too late' that the Punjab group in Delhi held an informal all-party consultation recently to find a way through the impasse. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Congress-I, Janata, BJP, CPI, CPI-M, the Lok Dal and the Akali Party. It was agreed that an all-party public meeting would be organised in Delhi soon, followed by a common programme to boost the confidence and morale of the two communities.

Unless the narrow exigencies of party politics can be set aside and united action is taken to restore faith in the political and administrative system, time could indeed be running out for a democratic solution in Punjab.

We the People of a Federal India

Inder Mohan

A federal system of Government is one in which several States unite under a central authority and still remain independent in internal affairs. In other words, federal units are supposed to be an association of units that are largely independent.

But federalism in the Indian system has been deliberately complicated, distorted even vulgarised. It is so, because of the compulsive double standards practised on the part of powers that be, particularly within the Centre.

In theory we are supposed to be a federal republic sustained by the five pillars of secularism, socialism, democracy, an independent judiciary and an elected parliament.

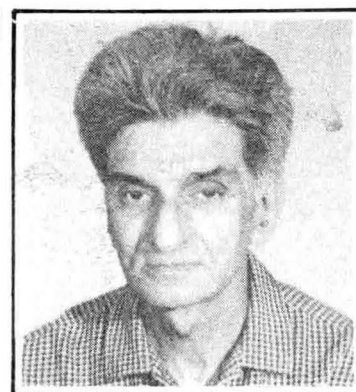
In practice we are being governed by a highly centralised government whose total authority remains vested in the hands of one individual and executed by a coterie of loyal and obedient servants.

As regards the strong pillars mentioned above, the less said the better. Religious fanaticism, obscurantism and fundamentalism are being encouraged by the State. If this leads to a communal divide and rioting, but serves narrow electoral interests of the party in power, or of certain opposition parties at a given time, the pretenders of "secularism" could not care less.

Corrosion of Democracy

Democracy is being corroded by a pre-planned policy of centralisation resulting in a unitary form of Government. Elections are fought with black money supported by muscle power with no holds barred, exploiting every caste and communal factor. All this reduces the concept of free and fair elections to a farce. Socialism has been made a hoax by ever growing poverty, unemployment and by increasing glaring social and economic disparities between a few haves and the multitudes of have-nots. Judiciary and parliamentary institutions are being eroded by conferring wide powers to the executive, by appointing pliable members of the judiciary, by manipulating elections and above all by imposing presidential ordinances at frequent intervals to serve the vested interests of the State under the garb of "public interest". The latest example is the ordinance amending section 3 of Commission of Enquiry Act of 1952 in order not to share the results of various enquiries with Parliament and the people.

Had our rulers been honest regarding the establishment of a federal Indian Republic, quite a



number of our present day problems would either have not arisen at all or would have been resolved long ago.

Article 370

For instance ever since application of article 370 was agreed upon in the case of Jammu and Kashmir State, it should have been logically followed by giving minimum feasible regional autonomy to the State. That would have resulted in internal autonomy for the people of Jammu and Ladakh, the two principal sub-regions of the State. But instead the Centre has usually preferred intrigues to impose a government which would be manipulated and have made subservient to it. Similarly, there have been simultaneous covert attempts to change the character of the population, particularly in the valley, by converting the natural majority into an artificial minority. In this respect the BJP, RSS and all communal elements within the ruling party have been colluding with each other. All such intrigues have been successfully resisted so far by the politically conscious people of J&K and in other parts of the country. Nevertheless such nefarious attempts to reduce the efficacy of article 370 have created avoidable hostility.

Distorted Campaign

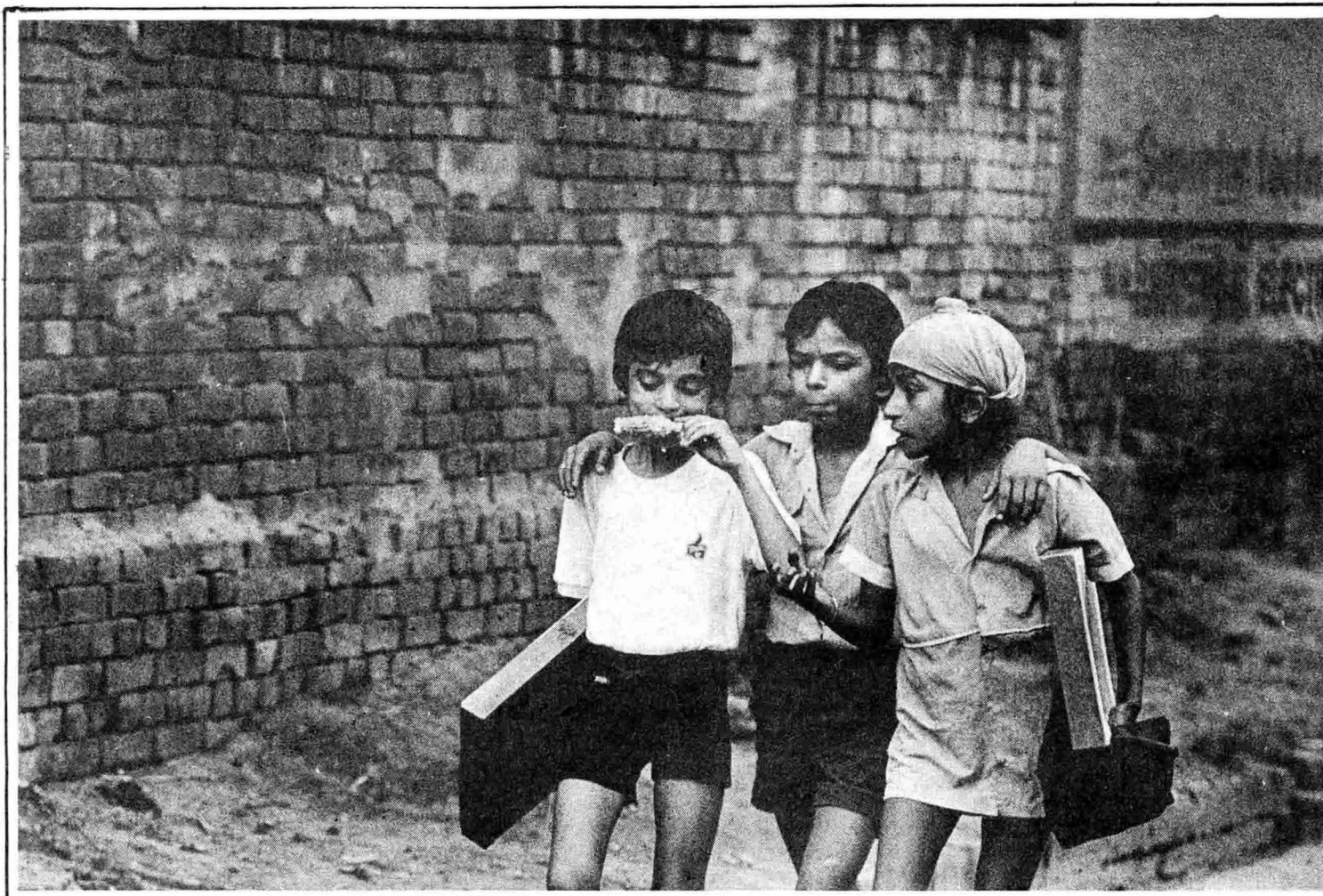
In the context of Punjab a person no less than the Prime Minister of India put across a totally distorted version of the Anandpur Sahib resolution throughout the length and breadth of the country during his election campaign in 1984. Had there been a rational approach towards the Anandpur Sahib resolution keeping in view all its positive features, particularly its economic and social contents, in the context of a Federal Republic of India, there would have been peace and amity among the Hindus and Sikhs of Panjab. Terrorism and extremism would not have found a breeding ground. This experiment is still worth pursuing.

Continued on page 10

PUNJAB

ALL IS NOT LOST

Sucha Singh Gill



Picture Raghu Rai Courtesy India Today

The Punjab situation is becoming increasingly alarming as the communal divide between the Hindus and Sikhs widens and communal alienation is converted into communal tension in several places. The All India Sikh Students' Federation (the AISSF), Damdami Taksal and Sikh terrorist organisations which represent the organised forces of Sikh communalism, and the Hindu Shiv Sena, Hindu Suraksha Samiti and Punjab Rashtriya Hindu Sangathan, their Hindu equivalents, have gained noticeable credibility among both communities particularly in urban areas. At Gurdaspur, Batala, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Nakodar, Patiala, Muktsar, there has been open confrontation.

At the political level Sikh communalism is supported by the United Akali Dal, some sections of Akali Dal (Longowal) and sections of Congress (I). Hindu communal bodies have the support of Congress (I) and at some places of BJP cadres. The social fabric of the Punjab is threatened, with communal harmony the first casualty.

Killings of innocent persons, mostly Hindus, but sometimes Sikhs, have increased. Untargeted killings, owned to by Sikh terrorist organisations, are meant to create terror, spread communalism and strengthen the secessionist

forces. Most victims belong to lower middle and working classes. Targeted killings aim at political opponents of secession and communalism. Journalists and writers are under threat and many are afraid to write against such forces. The recent declaration of Khalistan and the subsequent developments have strengthened such trends. The restrictive provisions of the law — Section 144, restrictions on two wheelers, curfews and extensive powers to police and paramilitary forces have failed to control the situation and have resulted in state terrorism. Not only has this added to the problems of the common man but it has contributed to the paralysis of democratic movements. In addition the disease of communalism has afflicted the State administrative machinery, which displays a clear cut bias for communal forces.

Forces outside the Punjab, particularly the deliberate policy of the Congress (I) at the Centre and in Haryana have further complicated the deteriorating situation. The non-implementation of the Punjab Accord, census operations in the Fazikka-Abhor area and the earlier holocaust in Delhi and other towns in Congress (I) ruled states have significantly accelerated the process. A party which talks loudly about national unity and integrity has contributed fully to the forces

of secession and disintegration. Crisis creators and crisis managers have played a decisive role in the growing Punjab tragedy.

The building up of the crisis has three aspects. First, Punjab's two equally strong traditions, of democratic movements on the one hand, and on the other traditions of communalism and communal alienation, a tendency further strengthened by the State's political processes. While Congress has followed the policy of balanced communalism, rather than secularism, the Akali Dal, in order to consolidate its political base, has increasingly relied on a sectarian Sikh approach and so strengthened Sikh communalism. The role of both political parties in equally heinous.

Development divides people

The second aspect of the crisis is the country's capitalist mode of development which generates its own contradictions. Having experienced the highest level of capitalist development, particularly in agriculture, the Punjab has manifested these contradictions in a more articulate manner. But such contradictions are bound to arise elsewhere as is already happening in Haryana. A class of capitalist farmers has been created, with surpluses at its command, and a rising level of

expectation. This class demands a greater share in political power to promote its socio-economic aspirations, a demand denied by the ruling class and party in power at the Centre. On the other hand a mass of poor peasantry also has a rising level of expectations but coupled with an eroding economic base. Its large force of educated, unemployed youth, not ready to work on farms, cannot find suitable employment to improve family conditions. Employment possibilities abroad are virtually sealed off. It is this manpower under the leadership of rich peasantry which is creating the crisis in the State.

The third aspect is the response to the socio-economic contradictions. One response is the Akali Dal Morcha closely followed by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) agitation. The Akali Dal articulated the peasants' demands mixing them up with religious demands of the Sikh community. The Congress (I) State government and the Centre responded with appeasement of the religious demands, but non-accommodation of the economic and political demands. This non-accommodation was supported by repressive measures and engineering of communal alienation. The policy encouraged extremist Sikh organisations and instigated communal Hindu organisations to openly oppose the Akali

Morcha. In order to defeat the Centre the Akalis compromised with Sikh extremists using them as a weapon. This political response to socio-economic contradictions has considerably weakened the democratic movement in the State and temporarily pushed central issues into the background. The Punjab Accord therefore does not touch these issues and cannot provide a lasting solution to the Punjab problem. The ruling elite wants to keep the Punjab pot hot, to boil over whenever the need arises, a dangerous game which both the Congress (I) and the Akalis are playing in the State.

Positive forces still exist

In contrast to growing communal tension in urban areas, a vast mass of peasantry landless, agricultural workers and others in rural areas are not yet communalised even though peasantry provides most of the manpower to militant Sikh bodies.

At village level Sikh peasantry have effectively protected Hindu neighbours in numerous instances. But while a few families leaving villages in Amritsar district following terrorist threats, provoke headlines and editorials in national newspapers, when a village community effectively persuades Hindus to remain and live without fear, it is not considered "big" news. Similarly workers and a vast section of employees in urban centres remain opposed to communalism.

These are forces which can be mobilized to decommunalise the situation. A vast majority of the population is free of communalism, has acted responsibly and not permitted communal clashes even under extreme provocation both before and after Operation Blue Star and the November holocaust. People have faced terrorist attacks boldly even when they are unarmed. They caught and handed over to police, terrorists in Ranike and Bahamanian villages and near Barnala town in Sangrur, at Hoshiarpur, Tarn Taran and Bakhatpur villages in Gurdaspur. Where communal Hindu organisations could neither face terrorists nor catch them, the common people did.

Another important indication of the people's positive attitude, particularly in the case of rural people, was seen around Nakodar and Muktsar where communal Sikh organisations tried to force a people's blockade on the Batala pattern. The strategy failed because of popular opposition. In these situations the lead was taken by the common people influenced by

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Oddities and eccentricities of the Kinnock tour

A 'FRATERNAL' VISIT AT
STATE EXPENSE

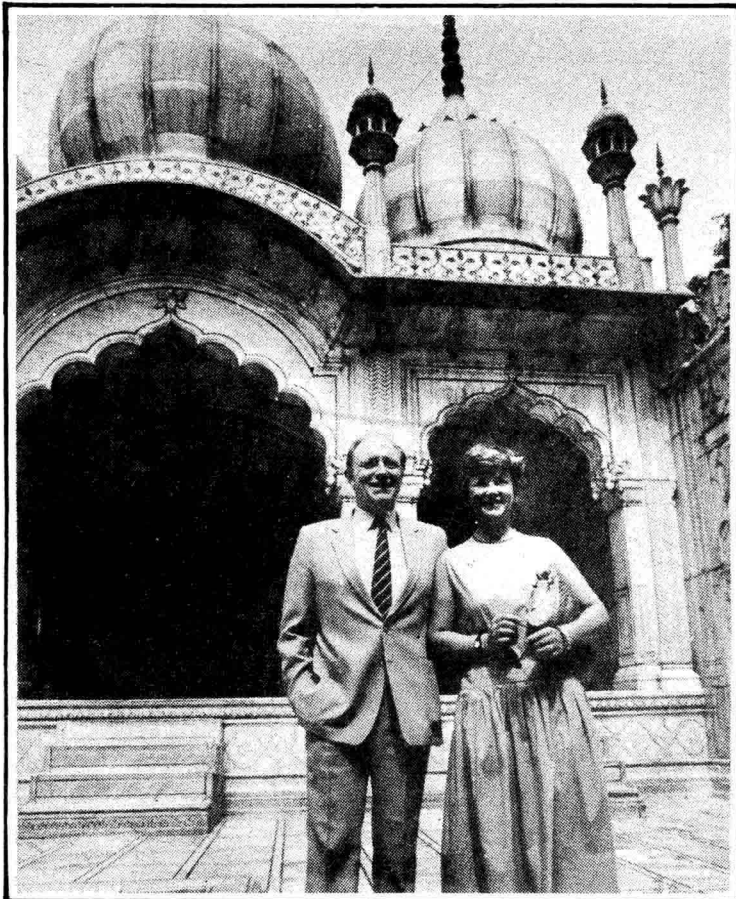
Neil and Glenys Kinnock were in India in May on a two-week visit. He is the leader of the opposition in Britain and heads the Labour party; she is a member of the same party and a school teacher in the London suburb of Brent. The couple's host in India was Arjun Singh. For historical reasons the British Labour Party has fraternal relations with the Indian National Congress, even though that party has now been rechristened the Congress-Indira.

The fraternal relationship between the two parties is based on a widespread belief in India as well as Britain that Indian independence was in great measure delivered by labour's generosity, even though it might not have been responsible for conceiving the new nation.

There are supposed to be other reasons for kinship relations between the two parties. Both, it is said, share a commitment to socialism, a claim that would not go unchallenged within both parties. While Labour's record of compromise with the realities of big business might possibly be less obvious, it would require rather a fertile imagination to ascribe a socialist or scientific temper to Rajiv Gandhi's Congress-I. A more natural ally of India's ruling party would seem to be Reagan's cowboy dispensation with its fizzy film-star culture and gunboat diplomacy. Neil and Glenys at least hinted at the dissonance in the Labour-Congress relationship by not sparing that 'Mad Man Reagan' in their generous criticism of the American president.

In New Delhi's Congress-I circles there is another sentimental reason for keeping the Congress-Labour liason alive: It has not been forgotten that old-world socialists like Michael Foot, Kinnock's predecessor, were ardent supporters of the Emergency between 1975-77. Tory or Labour, when the chips are down, the idea of political freedom in the developing world turns into a luxury the West cannot afford.

There were other oddities about the Kinnock visit. A party to party affair, it was nevertheless the protocol division of the Foreign Office, which per-



Neil and Glenys Kinnock in pre-British Mughal Delhi Courtesy Statesman

formed all the duties of major-domo instead of the party office. Even the President's Estate threw in its resources to make the Kinnocks feel 'at home' by providing them an Ashoka-lion ensigned English limousine to drive them around in the capital. A senior member of the High Commission staff explained politely that such state hospitality would not have been provided on a reciprocal basis to the leader of the opposition from India on a visit to Britain — not even to fraternal socialists! And no doubt Buckingham Palace would not have relaxed its stiff upper-lip, at least not in public.

The Congress-I and Government of India's attempt to woo the British labour leader, appeared to have made an impact. Just as Michael Foot gave Mrs Gandhi a good chit for the emergency, Neil Kinnock also found himself making statements which his hosts would have liked to hear from him. After a toast to the couple at a dinner party in the High Commissioner's residence, the leader of the British opposition sallied forth

into a light-hearted description of the Indo-British relationship. He related a story about non-communication between two drinking companions, a story about two Welshmen in a pub who had been bending elbows together for years.

Every evening the two Welshmen talked about everything under the sun. Like the weather, rugby, cricket etc. etc. After twenty years or so of their relationship, one asked the other, "Joe you know, all these years of meeting, drinking, talking; not once have you asked me how my wife is".

Rather shaken, the other said, "You know you are absolutely right. Tell me how is your wife?"

At this the first one almost shouted back: "No, no, don't mention her!"

Neil Kinnock too followed up his story with no mention of any aspect of Indo-British relations except terrorists, the current 'rugby and cricket brand of antagonism' in relations between the two countries. There was no mention of sales of military hardware, Westland helicopters, fertilisers and pesticides, mining equipment or even the future of the English language in this country. It was an angle gesture on the part of the British Labour Party to say "thank you for looking after us so well".

At least a couple of us at the dinner who represented the turbaned — bearded species of India, did well to keep straight faces and a camouflaged upper lip.

BM.

We the People of a Federal India

Continued from page 8

How is it that in spite of the myth having been floated regarding prosperity in Panjab and Haryana that there is every growing unemployment, along with a steady increase in the numbers of landless labourers stricken with abject poverty. Not only that, these so called prosperous States have been infested with bonded labourers subjected to inhuman exploitation. This harsh reality exists because there has always been a shrill cry for a strong Centre and concentration of political and economic powers in the hands of a chosen few.

Sharing Eco and Political Power

Had the Centre shared economic and political power with the people of Panjab and Haryana on the basis of minimum regional autonomy, there would have been voluntary coordination and willing cooperation between all the three.

India is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of natural resources. Ironically, its vast millions remain one of the poorest in the world. This is because of mismanagement of resources and lop-sided planning denying the people their due. The States are brought into the picture only when the Centre needs to pass on the buck to them at inconvenient or embarrassing moments. This happens when brutal repression is let loose on constantly oppressed people whenever they rise against social and economic injustice. Then these matters become State subjects.

Identical Problems

The problems are identical in States like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, the entire North Eastern belt, eastern UP and in fact all over the country. Poverty and abundance of natural resources prevail side by side. Mass starvation, savage exploitation of child labour, unemployment, large numbers of landless labourers, regular sale of girls and women in open markets are the order of the day. The local people have no say in formulating plans and schemes supposed to be for their welfare, what to say of their proper implementation, which always evades them. The central government obsessed by its desire to have a strong Centre seeks to put up yesmen at the helm of affairs in states after state. Wherever it finds an inconvenient self respecting, assertive and independent Chief Minister, his government is dismissed under one false pretext or the other. So far the Centre and its henchmen in the states have been usurping all the natural re-

sources through 'developmental' projects, which are invariably most harmful to ecology and human beings particularly the tribals. The projects are also kept under strict central control. Such an approach has consistently resulted in mass discontent, upsurge and at times militant actions on the part of the people. Instead of taking a human approach, the governments at the Centre and in the States resort to ruthless brutal repression against the people who organise themselves to demand social and economic justice. In this respect all interventions by the armed forces, para-military troops and various police actions have failed to control the situation.

The picture would have been different if long over-due autonomy had been granted to the States on their regional basis. Not only that, the Centre has been playing another trick against the people all through. Their genuine regional aspirations for social justice have been misinterpreted, misrepresented and sought to be wrongfully mixed up with parochialism and communalism.

Had the States been left free to make equitable distribution of their natural wealth among their own people, their emotional and political integration with the country as a whole would have taken place with less stress and tension. In such circumstances the redundant forum of the National Integration Council being used or misused as a show piece would not have been needed.

At the same time, let us be clear, that to have a federal system of government alone will not be enough. There has to be decentralisation of power from the Centre to States, from States to districts and from districts to villages. Only then, can the people be expected to perform their duties towards the country properly and thus justify their social and economic rights.

Finally, in order to govern a federal system successfully, electoral reforms, are equally important. Total elimination of black money power, muscle power and communal propaganda are a must. Along with this, the electoral system will also have to be changed. Elections based on proportional representation could prove to be most effective in this respect.

Needless to say that no 'strong Centre' can survive without strong States. Ultimately a strong Centre and strong States can both survive only when genuine regional, economic and social aspirations of the people have been adequately and justifiably met.

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The Voyage of the Komagata Maru

A glorious chapter of the freedom movement

There is a colourful, exciting and eventful backdrop to the story of the Komagata Maru: why and how its passengers left their native Punjab; their attempt to enter Canada in vain; the voyage back and the police action that killed passengers when they arrived in Calcutta. A story cast in the mould of adventure, revolution, assassination, counter-intelligence, human suffering and tragic romance.

The story begins in Punjab, the home of a people known for their hardy frontier spirit, their soldiering and farming skills. Pioneers willing to have a go at anything. It is from Punjab that India's minority community of turbaned and bearded Sikhs comes from. It is from here that these people spread across the world. Eastwards across the Bay of Bengal and the Pacific to Vancouver and California. Westwards across the Khyber Pass and Arabian Sea to Africa, west Asia and Britain. All along, their spiritual centre continued to be the Golden Temple in Amritsar, but their home became the whole world.

Punjab in turmoil

At the turn of the present century, Punjab was in turmoil. Famines and plague had taken four millions lives; land taxes were high and indebtedness rampant amongst small farmholders. Murders over land disputes were common and there was much addiction to opium and alcohol.

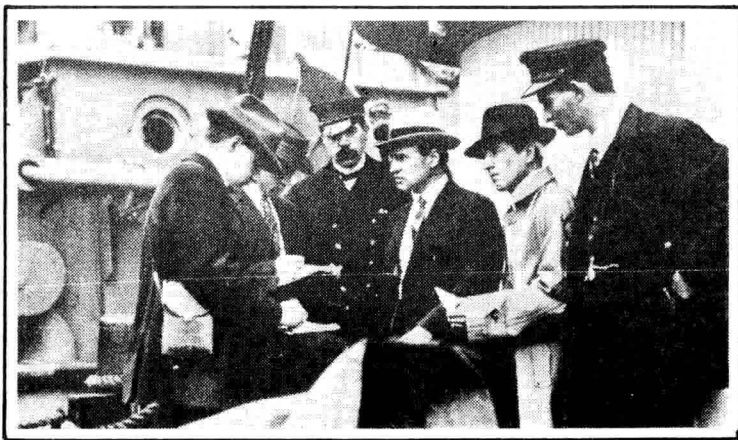
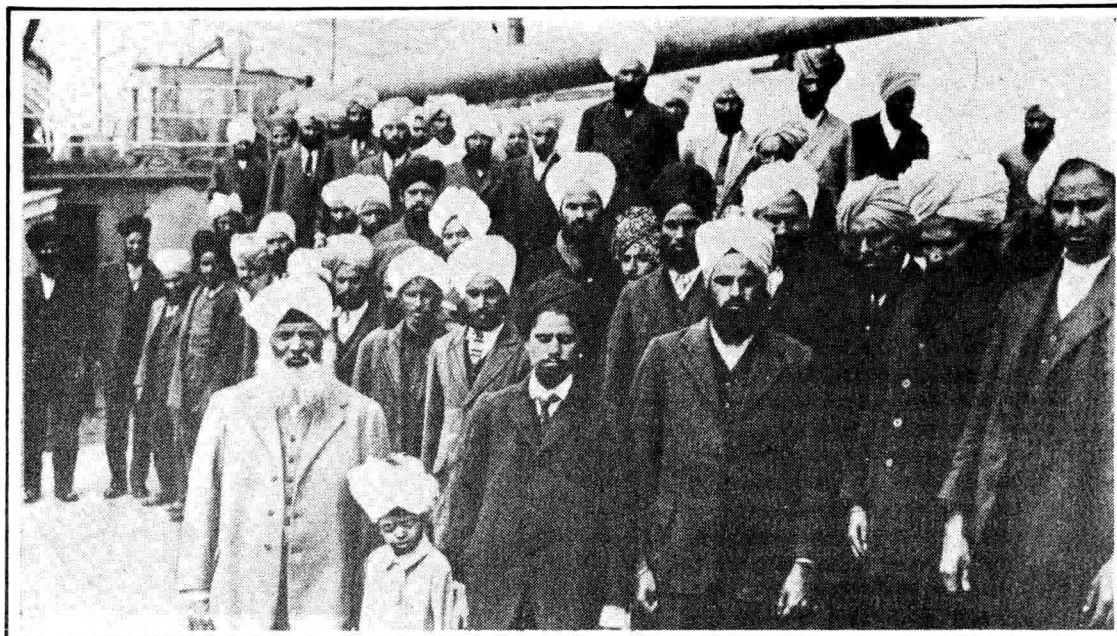
The Sikhs were in a rough, belligerent and aggressive mood. They were angry with the British administration and ready to respond to the politics of terrorism, assassination and revolution.

Glory of the Raj

It was also a time when the Raj was at the pinnacle of its glory. The British had transferred their seat of power from Calcutta to Delhi, and, in the tradition of their predecessors the Mughals, announced the building of a new capital. A few years earlier the most imperial of viceroys, Lord Curzon, had presided over a realm that the British seemed determined and indeed capable of ruling for ever.

In 1911, their imperial Majesties George V and Queen Mary visited India and indulged in the extravagance and splendour of the historic Delhi Durbar. But behind the pomp, pageantry and show of power, there was a deceptive calm, an uncanny feeling of revenge and rebellion. The British called it sedition.

The cult of the bomb, accompanied by an emerging revolutionary, consciousness, spread rapidly to other parts of India



Above: Gurdit Singh (left) ready to go ashore with other passengers. Left: Hopkinson extreme right with other officials.

from Bengal. The power and glory of the Raj came under attack from a growing wave of violent upheavals. In 1910, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, was singled out for assassination.

The Guru Nanak Jahaz

So this is the story of the voyage of the Komagata Maru, a Japanese cargo boat which took 376 people (340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims and 12 Hindus) on a journey across the Pacific from Hong Kong to Vancouver.

The year was 1914; Europe was on the brink of the First World War. While Britain was bracing itself to meet the German challenge to its imperial supremacy, the passengers on board the former coal ship, which they had renamed the *Guru Nanak Jahaz* after the founding guru of the Sikhs, were taking to the high seas in a bid to exert their rights as citizens of the British Empire. Their destination was British Columbia where a few thousand of their friends and relatives had already settled. Those on board had resolved to claim their right to equal treatment with white citizens of the Empire and force entry into Canada.

Breaking the race barrier

The man who made the voyage possible was Gurdit Singh, a Sikh businessman settled in Singapore. He set off determined to challenge Canada's newly enacted immigration rules. Each prospective immigrant was required to have 200 dollars on landing and a through ticket on a single ship from his country of origin. It was a case of saying, 'If you are not white, you may not enter this White Man's Land'. Gurdit Singh chartered the ship, arranged the finance, collected the passengers, firing their zeal to meet the most impossible conditions, undaunted by Canada's colour bar.

When the ship sailed into Canadian waters, she was refused entry into the port and had to anchor off Vancouver Bay for two months. The passengers had to endure extreme physical hardship and relentless harassment by immigration officials. They were denied water and food and threatened by naval gunboats. But the Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus remained united, boosting their morale with the spirit of Ghadr (Revolution) and soul-stirring religious singing.

The ship was eventually forced to return to Calcutta. But by now the passengers were full of revolutionary fervour and once in India, determined to join the terrorist movement against foreign rule. In Yokohama they picked up two hundred automatic pistols and two thousand rounds of ammunition which had been sent through a courier from California. The Raj on its part was equally determined to prevent the infiltration of the Komagata Maru Ghadr into the politically volatile atmosphere of Punjab. On their disembarkation at Calcutta, troops opened fire while attempting to control the passengers and a number of them were killed. And so ended a tragic voyage. The horrendous experiences of the passengers and the heartless intransigence of the colonial authorities boiled the blood of Punjabis. A spirit of disaffection and rebellion spread across northern India culminating in the bloody massacre of over three hundred innocent men, women and children at Jallianwala Bagh in the precincts of Amritsar's fabled Golden Temple.

Secret service agent

The Canadian and British authorities were keen to stem the tide of emigration to North America, where Indian immigrants had already established the Ghadr Party to finance, supply and support by all possible means the terrorist movement in India. As a network of secret revolutionary societies spread from the Punjab and Bengal to Indian communities overseas, an intelligence organisation grew apace to track down the conspirators.

William Charles Hopkinson, an Indian-born Englishman on secondment from the Indian Police, was a dedicated secret service officer stationed in Vancouver to monitor and report the activities of the Ghadr. When the Komagata Maru anchored off Vancouver in the early hours of Saturday 23rd May 1914, Hopkinson was there with the Canadian officials. And so began a battle of nerves between the ship and the shore committee of Sikhs on one side, and Hopkinson and Canadian immigration on the other.

Revenge assassination

Hopkinson's intelligence-gathering clearly established the connection between the Ghadr of Vancouver and California with terrorists in India. He informed the Indian authorities that since the return of the Komagata Maru, the Ghadr were planning a mass return to India to take part in a violent uprising against foreign rule. Ironically, his own role was now reversed from keeping Indians out of North America to preventing their departure for India!

In the eyes of the revolutionaries, Hopkinson and his informers were marked men. A few weeks after the Komagata Maru left Vancouver, a spate of killings took place: Ghadr versus traitors who had become a part of the British-Canadian intelligence network. Eventually on October 21st 1914, the Ghadr got the man they most wanted: Hopkinson was gunned down in the corridor of the provincial courthouse in Vancouver where a trial involving the murder of one of their own men was in progress.

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Whatever should be done now? Renounce everything, don saffron and go abegging? Chchi! Beg? Is there anything so despicable? Why not rob the bastard who is depriving me of my life? Which dharma will be damaged by robbing the robber?

Translated from Tamil

The Pattar went on a kind of sympathy-seeking mission round the city for a few days, shedding tears over his two motherless daughters growing up fast. The joint burden of debts and two daughters turned a man of forty into something of immense antiquity. Was there at least strength left in the body? No. The capital acquired in those days spent in pleasant company was not all lost. Those peculiar complaints, which had played hide-and-seek with medicines till now, started being matey once more.

When Ramanujalu Naidu of the Indo-European Motor Mechanical Works gave the Pattar the job of a fitter, he fell at the Naidu's feet, calling him 'Annadata'. Pattar just couldn't help it, could he? You would have done it too. I too, if there

had been two girls to bring up and no job.

The salary Naidu paid was an impressive twenty rupees a month. From six in the morning till the workshop closed for the day, Ramasami Pattar remained on duty.

This went on for a year. It was a year of secure poverty.

That thing they talk about sitting relaxed in armchairs...that thing they call recession...well, that thing came along. You and I could discuss for hours about the principles of recession, about its intricacies, about its essential features. We could also write a lot about all this. But neither you nor I could be so clear about what exactly recession is as Ramanujalu Naidu was. Now Naidu was a nice person, really. At times he helped one out with a fiver or even a tenner. But

then he had left Madras for Tirunelveli to amass wealth. He had not migrated to open a charitable trust for his workers.

Naidu axed. Ten victims. One of them was Ramasami Patter. They begged. They prostrated themselves before the god. They said they would work on half pay. But then, it was not a dharamsala that Ramanujalu Naidu ran.

Now, supposing there is a nice, fat cow. What is its food? It is just luxurious, isn't it? The cow is the apple of, the eye. Now, supposing the cow grows old. No milk. Do we worship it then? No. Certainly not. We decide to get money for its skin at least. We get rid of the cow, don't we?

And so, what was really wrong with Ramanujalu Naidu wielding the axe? So, that was that. That was just that. He who

calls it wrong is stupid.

When Ramasami Pattar received his salary that day, he did not know what exactly to do, really. The money would last exactly four days. After that? Some other workshop? Wouldn't it be the same story there too? The world, Pattar decided, was just heartless. If the Pattar had had the third eye, he would have reduced everything to ashes. He had only two, and with them he spotted the nearest toddyshop.

What should be done now?

Whatever should be done now? Renounce everything, don saffron and go abegging? Chchi! Beg? Is there anything so despicable? Why not rob the bastard who is depriving me of my life? Which dharma will be damaged by robbing the robber?

Ramanujalu Naidu would be going through the accounts round ten or eleven at night. Why not deal with him then? Ramasami Pattar gave his daughters the money left over after the time spent at the toddyshop. He gave the money like a machine and ate like a machine.

"Why are you like this, Father?"

There was no answer to the question.

suddenly the Pattar caught hold of his daughters and started kissing them quite violently, turn by turn. Among Hindus, fathers don't kiss grownup daughters. They just do not have the right to.

The girls got nervous. They wondered if their father was drunk. They quaked with fear.

"We have good times ahead of us? Naidu has offered me a job of fifty rupees in Madras. He has asked me to come and get some advance to-night!" he said.

The Pattar left the house to fulfill his wishes.

As expected, Ramanujalu Naidu was alone.

"Oh, Ramasami! What can I do? I just can't help it! Its no use coming to me, really!" Naidu said.

"What you've given me is not enough!" Ramasami said. His voice sounded different.

May be he's drunk, thought Ramanujalu Naidu. "Come Tomorrow", he said.

"Tomorrow? Just see what I do to you! You have ruined my family, you robbing rascal!" Ramasami pounced on the Naidu and made a grab for the notes.

Naidu was all alone, of course. But then the entire world was not sleeping, was it?

Ramasami was caught simply.

What else is there to elaborate on?

It was assault with intent to rob. Six months.

Pattar has free meals now. Which trade union is so benevolent towards a worker charged with theft? There is justice in the world, isn't there?

Its difficult to write about the girls, really.

This ancient Hindu society of ours, which has discovered the principle of sins visiting you because of your misdeeds in an earlier life, would regard it all as quite natural, wouldn't it? ●





From Author to Deputy Minister

Dalip Singh

The recent elevation of a couple of writers to the ranks of MPs reminds me of my own experience when the hidden hand of providence (or was it the Intelligence Bureau?) picked me up from the flourishing (or should I say the impoverished) tribe of writers and catapulted me into the dizzy heights of Indian politics. I was not only nominated to the Parliament but also made a Deputy Minister.

Well, about that later. First, let me tell you about my self. I too am a writer. Does that sound like a confession? In a way it is. A confession invariably helps to dissolve the feeling of guilt.

Long before I was inducted into politics I was a rather principled writer, personally against all kinds state patronage of writers and supported all those who condemned it. Whenever concerned people organised a meeting or a demonstration, to expose the government's hand in corrupting writers by offering them all sorts of temptations, I always made it a point to attend it and join them in urging the government to leave us authors alone.

my duties in an exemplary way. So I decided to begin by drawing up a list of do's and don'ts for myself. I had hardly started, however, when an interruption came—in the form of a poet whom, in the days of my political wilderness, I had seen in the coffee house regaling his friends with musky verses.

"You can't imagine how happy we are at your elevation from a coffee house chair to a 'gaddi' in the government. Our congratulations. — Oh don't worry! I have not come to ask a favour, oh no—you know I am not that type, don't you? Indeed, we all want you to function without fear or favour. As soon as I read in the papers about your well-deserved appointment I was transported into a poetic frenzy! This poem which, emerged which I really did not write. It was dictated, believe me, by some Hidden Power, about which I know little."

In spite of my protests about time and place and heavy work, he insisted on reading out the poem, which compared me to Alexander the Great. Blushing

not deny the public the right to know you better!"

I was thinking frantically of some way to get away from all this when another visitor joined us. He introduced himself as a historian. "In the course of my in-depth research in the ancient past of India, I accidentally came upon this. I thought you like to see it." "THIS" was a genealogical table linking my family to Lord Krishna.

"You are a direct descendant of the Lord", he said. Like everyone else, in my youthful days I had my flings and sown my wild oats. But that it was because of some 'Govinda' blood in my veins, was a bit of a revelation, if you know what I mean. "You are a Kanwar, you know! This record of mine must be published to give you your rightful place. Government grants are wasted to determine useless things like the date of birth of Shivaji. Why shouldn't the government publish genuine research such as this?" he asked indignantly, very angry at the injustice done to me.

I tried to explain to the historian that I had never seen a halo

PUNJAB ALL IS NOT LOST

Continued from page 9

left forces. Similarly outmigration of Hindus from villages in certain areas has not been allowed by Sikh peasantry which has guaranteed security of their life and property.

Apart from a vast popular secular base, organised forces under the CPI, CPM, and different Naxalite groups have stood against communalism. The CPI organised demonstration against Bhindranwale's terror at Moga, Bhagpurana, and Mansa must be remembered. In the Valhotra area (Amritsar) the CPI ex-MLA, Comrade Arjun Singh Mastana, continued the anti-terror campaign until he fell to terrorist attacks. He helped in capturing some terrorists by villagers and exposed the role of ruling politicians. Left controlled newspapers have raised their voices against the communal poison.

Though less active the CPM has also played its part in this battle. Its student wing, the Student Federation of India (SFI) clashed openly with the AISSF at Tarn Tarn, Phagwara, Dera Bassi, Rajpura and other places. Recently the CPI and CPM organised dharna against the killing of innocent persons and communalism in all Punjab towns. Their trade unions have also played a significant role. Various Naxalite groups have taken a bold, forthright stand against communal forces and

campaigns through their periodicals and leaflets, while openly challenging terrorist backed Sikh organisations in Moga and Rampura Phul areas. More recently the Punjab Students Union (PSU) Dhaliwal group, has challenged the AISSF in Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts and following armed confrontations, the AISSF was forced to withdraw.

However Congress(I) and Akali administrations have virtually banned public meetings and demonstrations by these left secular forces. On the other hand, both Hindu and Sikh communal bodies have been permitted to demonstrate and indulge in violence under the garb of religious activities. Members of left organisations have been implicated in false cases, beaten and tortured by police and armed forces and, above all, have faced the terrorists' wrath. The left movement lost Arjun Singh Mastana, Sumit Singh of Preetlari, Sukhraj Khaddar of Chingari, Rattan Singh of Surkh-Rekha, and almost all prominent leaders are under threat. One can have many complaints against the left forces but to-day they are the only organised positive force against communalism and secession in the State. And they need to be encouraged. ●



Then came the day when I was the one chosen to be elevated to the exalted position of a member of parliament. When that happened, I conveniently ignored whatever I had said or done before. In other words I immediately started appreciating the wisdom of the famous adage, 'Let bygones be bygones', and developed a forward looking philosophy overnight.

Some of my friends did their best to caution me not to yield to the temptation. They reminded me that politics is the last refuge of scoundrels. But, right then their logic did not appeal to me. I retorted that in these days of 'Gandhian' politicians it is almost senseless to believe in a thing like that!

However, it did not take me long to come to my senses. And this is how it happened.

I had just returned from Rashtrapati Bhawan after the swearing-in ceremony. My appointment as Deputy Minister had come as a surprise to many including myself. However, I was determined to justify my appointment and discharge



and embarrassed, I tried to explain to him that a democratic set-up like our provided no place or opportunity of the kind prevailing in Alexander's time. He brushed it all aside.

"I know your Calibre, my friend," he exclaimed. "What I have said in the poem is the truth, and nothing else. I am going to include that poem in my anthology, coming out this week. Let the world read it, and judge for itself. Believe me, the government would like to buy at least a thousand copies to send to the libraries. You can-

around the head of either my father or mine and didn't even expect to. But he was not, to be put off so lightly. He said I did not have the historian's eye.

At this moment who should walk in but my old primary school teacher. "I told you always", he said, "that the prescribed texts were all wrong. No child can learn from them. Do you remember how I taught you from texts I had prepared myself? And look where you have reached! It's lucky for me, my book has been published just when the nation has recognised your talents! Other children can be helped also, in the way you were..."

At this point, the last straw had been placed on the camel's back, the cup was overflowing, the end of the tether had not only been reached but was being chewed in helpless exasperation. "LEAVE ME ALONE", I shouted and ran out. I did not stop until I was in Rashtrapati Bhawan again, and had delivered my resignation. Then I slunk out and again joined the crowd demanding that the government leave the writers and authors alone. ●

HINDU FEARS IN PUNJAB

Continued from page 3

reasons are purely economic. Before this unrest most of the police depended on activities such as the illicit liquor making 'Bhattas' for extra income; now instead they make a better sum from the Hindu families in lieu of their protection. On the other hand the Sikh families have to pay protect their sons from police harassment. In some instances some people have even identified the terrorists as being policemen. With a largely Sikh police force this becomes a direct cause of communal mistrust. The CRPF and BSF are quite ineffective because their ultimate control lies with the police. The Hindus feel safest with the Army.

Q. Would you feel safer with the Congress-I in power?

A. No! The Akalis may have betrayed the Hindus of Punjab but we have few illusions of the Congress. Their unscrupulous games have sold the state to total anarchy. Whichever party is voted to power the other will stop at nothing it destabilize and the dangerous elements that have surfaced once will always be available for exploita-

tion. Perhaps it is time to give a party like the CPI-M a chance.

Q. Will you return to Punjab?

A. Yes! And I speak for all these families when I say that we will return but not until Punjab is made safe for the Punjabi. For our sake we hope it will be soon.

The unscrupulous politician, the corrupt police force and the insensitive army, are all too familiar terms; once again significant in the tale of the migrating Hindu. However the media has through consistent rhetoric confined the Punjab problem to communal equation. Admittedly communal disharmony today is a convenient and persuasive argument for dismissing government responsibility for the widespread unrest in the country. If the Punjab crisis is erroneously presented as a communal fait accompli it will spell final and irreversible disaster. Today that line of discretion is very fine and even irresponsible innuendo can do serious damage. Can the Punjabis demand this discretion to preserve their Punjab? ●

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The State of India's Environment

June 5 was World Environment Day. Another day when we further poisoned our air, polluted and wasted our water resources and continued to cut down our forests. It was another day when we denourished the soil, polluted the lives of mil-

lions with hunger disease and unemployment; another day which saw the erosion of the human right to live in a social and geophysical environment of peace, justice and democracy.

Water

Today, India uses a tenth of the rainfall it receives annually and even 40 years from now, will be using a quarter. But it must learn to store the water and use even the fraction it uses without polluting it, otherwise there will be serious water shortage.

India's groundwater resources are almost 10 times its annual rainfall. But with over 170,000 tubewells added every year during the 1970s, the water table is declining in many areas, leaving the dugwells of the poor high and dry.

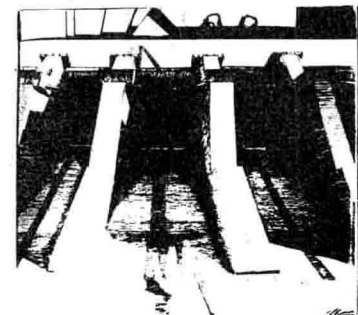
Ancient India stored rainfall in tanks and ponds but the British and the independent Indian administrations have neglected them, so where tanks irrigated half the cropped area a century ago they now irrigate less than 10 per cent. Experts calculate that tanks built over 30 per cent of India's land area could store a quarter of its rainfall.

All but two of the high-altitude lakes in India are steadily dying because of pollution. The slow death of Kashmir's Dal lake is threatening the livelihood of 50,000 fisherfolk.

The ecological value of wetlands has yet to be understood. Calcutta's Salt Lake City today stands on a former sprawling wetland and the result is, with the city's natural drainage system blocked, every shower turns into a flood and the city has lost a major source of fish, its favourite food.

Increasingly polluted rivers and lakes and large dams are seriously affecting riverine fisheries. The migratory hilsa, a much sought delicacy, is being dammed to death.

Dams



Large dams are today India's most controversial environmental issue. Silent Valley has already been given up. Groups are protesting against another half a dozen.

The key issue is not nature but people. Energy and water planners are stressing hydro-power and canal irrigation but have made no study of how many people will be displaced.

Government officials argue that "someone has to suffer for progress". Usually these "someones" are tribals, the poorest and the most powerless.

The colossal Narmada Basin Development Programme, which will involve the building



Millions of riverine fisherfolk, their very survival uncertain, now travel long distances and months in search of fish.

Dam waters now cover nearly one per cent of India's land area, but produce little fish and provide little employment for the impoverished fisherfolk, the highest annual yield of a reservoir is only 190 kg a hectare annually, but some fish ponds record 8,000 kg a hectare.

India's inland fish catch is growing, mainly because of the spurt of aquaculture in private ponds controlled by rich farmers, even as pollution snatches away from millions of poor fisherfolk their livelihood.

of 329 large dams, may end up costing Rs 25,000 crore. It will also displace a million people.

Experience shows that people, for the moment, are prepared to move but they want new land for old. Except in Maharashtra, this principle is not accepted by any state government.

The cost of forests lost is also high. Large dams have drowned half a million hectares of forest — about a tenth of the area that has benefitted from canal irrigation.

With 176 major and 447 medium irrigation projects, under construction, most behind schedule, some experts argue: "No new projects now: consolidate and learn to get good crops from what we already have".

Small earthen dams for water harvesting are both ecologically sound and economically profitable. Three small reservoirs have transformed the economy of a village near Chandigarh. There is no soil erosion, no deforestation, no desertification, and no one has been displaced. The lesson: water conservation, yes; big dams, no.

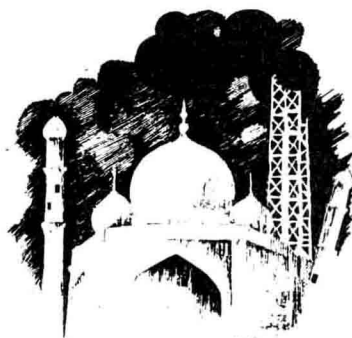
Atmosphere

The world's worst air pollution problem could be the woodsmoke inhaled by poor rural women while cooking. A tonne of particulates from household woodstoves may actually lead to more, than 500 times the human exposure than a tonne of particulates from a coal-fired power station.

A study in Gujarat shows that women while cooking inhale 40 times the volume of suspended particles considered safe by WHO. In barely three hours they inhale an amount of carcinogenic benzo (a) pyrene that equals 20 packs of cigarettes, more than any industrial worker will be exposed to in any industry in eight working hours.

Exposure during the monsoon, when people reduce the ventilation points in their homes, can be eight times the normal.

As wood becomes scarce, women turn to cowdung, which generates even more pollution. Many new cooking fuels like crop wastes and weeds have never been tested for pollution



hazard.

A 15-year study in Delhi found the same incidence of corpulmonale (enlargement of the heart) in both men and women, even though few women smoke, and concluded this to be the result of women's exposure to woodsmoke.

Exposure to woodsmoke is particularly harmful for malnourished, anaemic women as carbon monoxide, an important component of woodsmoke, increases the effect of anaemia by reducing the haemoglobin available in the blood. Over a quarter of Indian women in the reproductive age group are anaemic.

Environmental air pollution is also increasing steadily. In 15

years, the quantity of sulphur dioxide released into the air has tripled. Acid rain, the scourge of forests and lakes in Europe and North America, is now found in industrialised areas like Bombay, Delhi, Pune.

Of the 48 thermal power stations officially surveyed in 1984, 31 had taken no pollution control measures and only six had their pollution control equipment functioning properly.

Giant superthermal power stations is the latest policy. At Singrauli, where over 10,000 MW of power generation capacity is to be ultimately sited, the million-odd people who will live there could be exposed to 10 times the pollution levels set by the government.

The current car and two-wheeler boom in Indian cities could choke thousands to death. Delhi's half-a-million motor vehicles spew 400 tonnes of pollutants daily. In Bombay, a municipal survey shows that air pollution is a major cause of tuberculosis and various respiratory ailments.

Forests

The latest satellite data confirm that India is losing 1.3 million hectare of forests a year, nearly eight times the annual rate put out by forest departments.

So great is the wood shortage and so high are wood prices that Tamil Nadu fisherfolk find it difficult to make catamarans, Karnataka villagers to buy new bullock carts and Andhra Pradesh craftspeople to make wood toys.

Nine dams are to be built along the Indravati in Bastar, India's last tribal frontier, turning the tribals refugees in their own homeland. Bastar's forests are also threatened with mines and wood-based industries.

By 1990, India hopes to green nearly 2 million hectares at a cost of about Rs 600 crore.

But the social forestry programmes are heavily criticised: trees are planted as commercial investment and not to fulfil basic survival needs of fuel and fodder.

They are, however, popular with farmers: in Uttar Pradesh, farmers picked up 30 times more seedlings than the target. But community woodlots, to meet the fuel and fodder needs of the poor and landless, reached only about a tenth of the target.

Social forestry may even be exacerbating the energy crisis for landless labourers. When 4 farmers in Punjab switch from cotton to eucalyptus, workers lose their main fuel: cotton stalks.

Eucalyptus covers nearly half a million hectares, but the tree is not very popular with environmentalists. In Karnataka, protesters have uprooted eucalyptus in several places, while some farmers have dug trenches between their fields and eucalyptus stands to keep eucalyptus roots away from their crops. Quick-growing eucalypt-

tus plantations are depleting soil nutrients in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.

Few attempts are being made to involve the landless in afforestation. Some 5 million to 10 million landless families could be settled on these lands, making it the country's largest land reforms programme.



Excerpts from: The State of India's Environment 1984-85 Centre for Science and Environment 807. Vishal Bhawan, 95 Nehru Place New Delhi-110019.

Punjab Struggles for Sanity

Continued from page 1

people, 10 Hindus and one Sikh were gunned down in a terrorist attack last month. Sikh shopkeepers have locked up their shops and Sikh families have all left, temporarily, to stay with relatives in the city. For Krishnanagar has a large Hindu majority.

One gets the feeling of ordinary people of both communities struggling desperately for sanity, for normalcy, struggling to cling to the life they have known, against forces which are trying to tear the Punjab apart through insensate killings, through fear and suspicion, through deliberately incited hatred. But because of administrative paralysis, total political failure as the Akali Dal leadership engages in internal power struggles and other political parties remain inactive, and New Delhi's deliberate or inept mishandling of the Punjab situation over the past four years, the Punjab crisis is accelerating at a frightening rate—a runaway train with no one at the controls. The terrorist strategy is clear: to induce a massive Hindu migration resulting in a Hindu backlash of violence against Sikhs outside Punjab followed by Sikh migration to the state. The result in terrorist terms, Khalistan.

Punjab In Microcosm

Jandiala Guru reflects the Punjab situation in microcosm. All the contributory elements are there—terrorist killings building up inter-communal tension, police inaction, the presence of militant Sikh and Hindu organisations ready to step into the situation, Hindu migration. The population of 18000 is made up of Hindus and Sikhs in equal proportions, 7000 each with Mazbis and Balmikis totally about 4000. The All India Sikh Students' Federation has five offices in Jandiala, the Hindu Shiv Sena an office affiliated closely with the Amritsar branch. Both organisations have workers in the village.

with Mazbi Sikhs belonging to both cadres.

A month ago, the Shiv Sena pradhan, Chaman Lal, was killed, allegedly by terrorists and tension has been building ever since, aggravated by the arrival of 30 Hindu families from villages around Khadur Sahib in Tarn Taran area. These families, from villages with tiny Hindu populations, left their homes after terrorist threats or actual killings. (We found the same pattern in other places in Amritsar district) Ashok Kumar, Chaman Lal's elder brother and now Shiv Sena pradhan, told us that on the afternoon of 29th May he had warned the police about suspicious looking young men circling the village in a Fiat and told them that he feared a terrorist attack. He stated angrily that the police took no notice.

That evening at 11.30 p.m. while a Ramayan Akhand 'paath' was going on in connection with the construction of a Balmiki Mandir, six young men—eyewitnesses told us they were Sikhs—came up the path from behind, and, without warning, two of them, their faces covered with their turbans, opened fire into the listening group. Young Tersem Singh or Lal—the names seem interchangeable died immediately Bhagwan Singh/Lal died in hospital. Both were Mazbis, neither was a keshdhari Sikh. Five others were wounded. One of them, 16 year old Raman Kumar, named two of the terrorists as a local boy, Sati, allegedly a known smuggler, and his accomplice. People told us angrily that the police had held both boys briefly, then released them.

Typical Communal Riot

After the cremation the next day, attended by Amritsar Shiv Sena cadres, the angry crowd tried to set fire to Sati's house and other Sikh homes. Night curfew was imposed and the CRPF sent to the village.

Jandiala had become a "hot spot". When we reached the village we found the Federation offices closed. The only Sikhs we saw were a handful of older men, silent and unsmiling, clustered together at the entrance to the village. The tension in the air was palpable. (According to newspaper reports, on the following day when Union Minister, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, tried to address a meeting in Jandiala's Municipal Hall, the village exploded into violence, as Shiv Sena and Federation cadres pelted each other with stones and acid bottles in a typical communal riot. When teargas failed to control the mobs, the police or CRP fired, and curfew was reimposed.

Seated in front of a garlanded photograph of his "shaheed" brother Ashok Kumar told us how the Shiv Sena membership had swelled from ten to 400 in the last month with a large number of Mazbis. Hindus and Harijans felt the need to unite against Sikh terrorists, he explained. We talked to Hindu families from Mianwid, Mathurawal, Dhote, Ekalgude, Chattewinde, Bindla, Takhto Chuk, Fatehbad, Walwa and other villages, who are camping in Jandiala. Sixty year old Swaran Lal, a halwai from Chattewinde, five kilometres from Amritsar, left after shopkeeper Bhagat Ram and his son Ajit were shot dead by terrorists. Chattewinde's 17 Hindu families had locked up their homes and come away. (Official migrant figures for Amritsar district up to the last week of May are 41 families who have left their homes with bag and baggage, while 177 who have gone without their belongings, ostensibly temporarily. But officials admit the figures are incomplete).

A government employee from Ekalgude (name withheld on request) had received threatening letters. The AISSF held a 'jalsa' at an annual mela at the local Gurudwara, he told us, and announced from their

pandal that all Hindu families should leave. They told all the Sikhs to boycott Hindus so that they would go. There were only eight Brahmin families in the village. There was no boycott, but neither was there reassurance or help. Fear obviously dominates both communities. Our informant recalled how, after Operation Blue Star, the Sikh sarpanch of the village had escorted them all to Jandiala for safety as he feared that he might not be able to protect them. "This time he told us that he could do nothing and we came on our own".

A government High School teacher (all government employees wanted their names withheld) from Pakhote had not attended school for several months. After the killing of a Hindu doctor in the village the "Federation boys" went to the school to ask who the Hindu teachers were. After that all three Hindu teachers went on 'medical leave':—A High School teacher from Bindala, who had more cooperative seniors, was asked to stay away from school after a young man visiting the school produced a 'list with the names of Hindu teachers. "They said we should stay away so that neither they nor we would be killed", so the Hindu teachers only registered attendance.

Definite Strategy

Talking to people in Jandiala, in other villages and in Punjab cities and towns confirmed the pattern being followed by terrorist action as described by official sources. The definite strategy which emerges is, first "snatchings" of scooters, arms and money; next systematic killings of 'informers' to the police, both Sikhs and Hindus, to warn off others and discourage Sikhs from helping Hindus. Next threatening posters appear on individual homes, at bus addas telling Hindus to leave within a certain time; people receive threatening letters on the same lines, often using vulgar language. In

Jandiala we heard again of the "taped terrorism", tapes with inflammatory speeches and songs extolling Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, containing veiled threats. These are the "Jago" tapes, the words "Jago aiye" now connote to the Hindu that death is on the way. These tapes are played from Gurudwaras, on buses, we were told, and the psychological warfare is taking its toll of people's nerves.

Hindu doctors, teachers, government employees are a deliberate terrorist target. Some have been killed, many have left. Hindus ask for transfer to other places, to cities. When these are not forthcoming they take leave. Local administration has been hard hit, in some places at a standstill. The examples of Jandiala and other terrorist-struck places force one, unwillingly, to conclude that in the disturbed areas terrorists are calling the tune. The sense of insecurity is all pervasive. The Golden Temple has a deserted look. Hindus stopped coming long ago, but now Sikhs too avoid their holy of holies. People are afraid to come, a young Sikh tells us, because anything can happen at any time.

The killings are increasing day by day. From 1.10.85 to 28.6.86 official sources admit 217 persons were killed, Hindus and Sikhs, with Hindus predominating by far with 88 deaths in Amritsar district and 46 in Gurdaspur. In May at least 72 people were killed in the Punjab. It is clear that the killings must stop if Punjab is to be saved from the brink. Officials agree that there is hope because so far apart from the three border districts the situation is in control in the rest of the state which does not make headlines. To stop the killings terrorists have to be isolated. The objective is clear but the strategy, either in Chandigarh or New Delhi, is anything but. The ordinary people of both communities have lost faith in all political parties to rescue them. That is the Punjab tragedy.

Haryana bid to derail Venkataramiah Commission

Continued from page 1

Exit Mathew, Enter Venkataramiah

With Justice Mathew throwing himself into a blind alley of indecision, it was now time for Justice Venkataramiah to arrive on the scene in a bid to succeed where Mathew had failed.

All the rest is history. Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab on January 26th as set out in the Accord. A pall of disillusionment and distrust of the Centre spread across Punjab. Extremism and terrorism received a further boost while the Barnala ministry's foundations began to rest on shaky ground.

Implicit in the appointment of the Venkataramiah Commission was the fact that areas other than Fazilka and Abohar could be identified for transfer to Haryana. Instead of participating

in the new commission with an open attitude, Haryana chose not to cooperate with it.

Haryana's Bombshell

Having adopted a dilatory and negative attitude right through the proceedings, Haryana then came up with a bombshell to claim 483 villages in 6 tehsils, measuring up to an area of 4.5 lakh acres. In addition it also demanded that the towns of Patiala, Sumana, Lalru and Dera Bassi be transferred to it.

This major change in Haryana's position from no claim to a massive claim was sprung on Justice Venkataramiah on May 29, just one day before he was to submit his report to the government.

Prior to inflicting this bombshell of a claim, Haryana consistently cold-shouldered various attempts by the Commission and

the Punjab government to persuade the state to agree to a reasonable solution. According to a mutually recognised formula of a 60-40 division of Chandigarh and its assets, Haryana's share of territory in lieu of Chandigarh works out at 6000 acres. However, in response to a suggestion from the Commission, Punjab stated its willingness to transfer 15,000 acres to Haryana for a new capital in and around the neighbouring township of Panchkula. Moreover, instead of promising the ten crores mentioned in the Indira Gandhi Award, as a grant Haryana to build a new capital, the Centre informed the Commission that it would be willing to contribute three hundred crores for a new capital.

But all these efforts were in vain. Haryana would not budge. It continued to adopt an obdurate attitude, refusing to

cooperate with attempts to find a way through the tangle in the larger national interest. Given the circumstances created by Haryana's unbending posture, the Venkataramiah Commission's life had to be extended by ten days; Bhajan Lal had to be nudged away and the decks cleared to place Chandigarh in Punjab where it rightfully belongs. If the new Chief Minister Bansi Lal can check-mate Devi Lal's oppositional fury to safeguard Haryanvi interests for purely electoral considerations and Chandigarh is actually transferred to Punjab, it would not necessarily spell the beginning of the end of the Punjab problem. It would perhaps have been a different story had the transfer not come five months too late since January 26 if not sixteen years too late since the 1970 Indira Gandhi Award.

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Kudal, Gandhi and the Nation

The case of the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram Chuchuyimlang provides a good illustration of what the Kudal Commission has achieved in the past 4½ years and its consequences.

The Kudal Commission's allegations dated 15th April 1985 make out that:

"By publication of (the afore-said) large scale maps under the garb of rural development work in the restricted border-areas, without obtaining permission of the Ministry of Defence and the Survey of India, revealed vital information such as locations of telephone exchanges, electric sub-stations,.... thereby contravened the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, 1923 and violated the Map Restriction Policy of the Government of India as the said maps and information contained therein, directly or indirectly, could be useful to an enemy... the disclosure of which is likely to affect the sovereignty and integrity of India as well as the security of the State."

What are the facts? Thirty years ago, in 1956, Gandhiji's distinguished associate Kakasaheb Kalelkar inspired a 23-year old Gujarati youngman Natwar Thakkar to go and spend some time in Nagaland which was seething with insurgency and rebellion. In the prevailing atmosphere citizens from other parts of India were generally not welcome. Indeed they were looked at with suspicion and hostility.

Natwar Thakkar jumped at the idea but agreed to go for a period of one year, that was in 1956. But he never returned from Nagaland, he made it his home, married there and raised children.

Lt Gen S P P Thorat, GOC Eastern Command was wonderstruck to find in April 1959, a non Naga Indian:

"It made me feel very happy and proud that an Indian, forsaking a comfortable home and a good career, has devoted his energies for the uplift of the Naga-People. I have no doubt that your Ashram which is already doing such sterling good work will gain further strength—the success of which will undoubtedly bring credit to you and to India."

Eight years later in May 1967 another senior army officer Major General Kalyan Singh in charge of security of the region confirmed that "Mr Thakkar is running a modest institution on real Gandhian principles with a missionary zeal. He is working under extremely difficult conditions and environment but seems to have won over the locals by his sincere approach and affection. I wish the institution success and bright future."

But the Kudal Commission, sitting in Delhi was framing allegations in 1984 that the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram was a threat to national security. Happily, at the very moment Col D H Arora, Dy Brigade Commander, 56 Mountain Brigade was watching the work of the

—A view from Chuchuyimlang—

L. C. Jain

For strange reasons of its own, the government is engaged in a witch hunt of some of the finest social work institutions in the country.

Ashram and Natwar Thakkar at the grass-root level:

"I have visited Gandhi Ashram and the medical relief camp organised under the aegis of the Ashram by Shri Thakkar. I think this is the first time that such reputed specialists from AIIMS, Delhi have come to this region and made available their services to the villagers. One has to see to believe what is not available to people back at Delhi is at the door step of the people in this remote place. This has only been possible due to tireless efforts of its organiser. A herculean task made possible by sound coordination by Shri Thakkar. A noble job unassumingly done deserves honours." (March, 1984)

There is a tradition in the administration to rely more on the assessment of the 'person on the spot' than on that of visitors, however distinguished. The Deputy Commissioner of the district is the administration's acknowledged 'man on the spot'. Here is an example of what he had to say as recently as 1985.

During my tenure as Deputy Commissioner, Mokochung for 2½ years, I have been in close contact with the Ashram, and the association has resulted in strengthening the impression that I had gathered about it—that the Ashram had always worked with a clear goal in mind that Nagaland is a part of India and that integration can best be achieved through voluntary social work."

The Northeast area and the work of various voluntary groups there, is also in the ambit of the intelligence agencies. Sample, the Ministry of Home Affairs written answer in the Lok Sabha on April 1, 1981 (a month before some Congress-I MPs launched a full scale attack on Gandhian organisations in the Lok Sabha alleging use of foreign money to destabilise India):

"Question No. 5934 answered on 1st April, 1981: Utilisation of foreign money by AVARD

Shri V N Gadgil

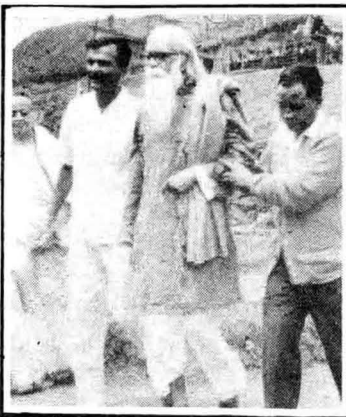
Shri R L Bhatia

Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

a) Whether it is a fact that the main area of operation of AVARD (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development, during the last few years has been the strategic eastern region of India;

b) Whether it is a fact that foreign money has been channelised by AVARD for helping those organisations who are engaged in agitational work in the eastern border of India;

c) Whether Government have instituted any enquiry; and



Shri Kakasaheb Kalelkar being escorted to the main building of Gandhi Ashram, Nagaland, Chuchuyimlang-Shri Natwar Thakkar is on Kaka Saheb's right.

d) if so, the findings thereof?

Answer: Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs Shri Yogendra Makwana

a) Government is aware that the organisation has undertaken some projects in the Eastern region as a part of their nationwide programme of activities.

b) Government have no such information.

c) No. Sir, but activities of such organisations are generally kept under watch and appropriate action under the law is taken as and when necessary.

d) Does not arise."

None of these guardians of India's national security, whether representing the Defence Ministry or the civil administration, who have watched the Ashram grow over three decades, found anything even remotely impinging upon India's national security—if anything they saw in it an endeavour to cement national integration in the face of one of the most prolonged and ferocious insurgencies in the region.

We may also ask the question as to what is the nature of work which the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram has been engaged in. Since the entire state of Nagaland is a tribal area, the work of this Ashram has been of direct interest to the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Extract from the Commissioner's statutory Report submitted annually to Parliament through the President of India, for the year 1979-81 speaks for itself.

"The Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, Chuchuyimlang was established in the year 1955. The first ever activity undertaken by the Ashram was the running of a small medical-aid Centre wherein distribution of free medicine and rendering of first-aid was arranged. In the year 1977 a multi-purpose medical relief camp was organised in collaboration with the Nagaland Government and the local Army medical set-up. Encouraged with the success achieved, the Gandhi Ashram, in October 1979 started a Health Centre.

The out-patients clinic of the Health Centre provided useful service to the tribes.

The Ashram is endeavouring to establish its branches in various parts of the State. Determination to do good deeds to the society gives no cognisance to difficulties and hindrances. This fact has been amply proved by Shri Natwar Thakkar, the Secretary of the Ashram and his team of dedicated workers who have done excellent work for the upliftment of the rural inhabitants of Nagaland and Chuchuyimlang in particular. His contribution to the cause of tribal welfare will be appreciated by all those who are aware of the problems of working in the remote corners of the country."

These findings were endorsed by Dr Man Mohan Singh, Dy. Chairman of the Planning Commission when he visited the Ashram some time back.

The Nagaland Gandhi Ashram has thus the best credentials any social work organisation could dream of—both from agencies responsible for India's security as well as those responsible for planning, development and social emancipation.

Now let us turn to the maps and data and details of infrastructural facilities reproduced in the Nagaland Block development plan prepared for the Ashram by AVARD (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development). These are based on Census of India publications available for sale in India and abroad. Any agency interested in such maps or details, for ulterior or benevolent motive, can purchase the Census publication for a mere ten rupees from the bazar. No agency needs the auspices of a voluntary organisation like the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram for such data. The meanest intelligence can see that the allegations are imaginary and baseless.

The rural development plan alongwith the maps and the data and information, round which the Commission has woven a web of sinister purpose, was prepared for the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and first submitted by AVARD to the Nagaland Government for approval. Both the Governor (Shri L P Singh at the time) and the State government accorded

their written approval in 1974—copies of which are on the records of the Commission. But since the allegations persist, it can be inferred that they are, in the category of 'inconvenient' documentation which had better be ignored.

Why has the Commission trained its guns on Natwar Thakkar. The reason is not far to seek. The Commission is on a hunt for those who have "tarnished" the image of Mahatma Gandhi; and wherever it finds an individual or institution associated with or praised by JP, it is convinced that the activities must be anti-national. This is what JP said about Natwar Thakkar in 1964 when he was on a peace mission there:

Be that as it may, while the Commission has yet to make a final report, the Government has already damned the Ashram and advised various ministries not to provide any funds to the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and indeed many other Gandhian and voluntary organisations.

Nagaland Gandhi Ashram is only one of the hundreds of bodies whose work has been brought to a grinding halt.

What motive the Government had in setting up the Commission in 1982 against Gandhian organisations in the aftermath of the Emergency is well known. These bodies defied the Emergency and many of their workers were imprisoned. To them the greatest legacy of Gandhi was fearless and staunch opposition and resistance to the wholesale curtailment of fundamental rights and civil liberties. The Emergency gave them an opportunity to demonstrate that they would not let Gandhi's legacy be shamed. But what no one is able to figure out is why the Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi continues to allow the Commission to function.

The consequences of the Kudal Commission are: the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram is dying but the Commission is swallowing large chunks of public funds. The Ashram is held out as public enemy and starved of aid. The Commission is held out as a protector of public interest and given unfettered access to public revenues being energetically collected by the Finance Minister. If the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram die—something precious to India, a symbol of national integration—will die with it.

Let us pray that Ramayana—like good will prevails and Sita is rescued in time ●



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